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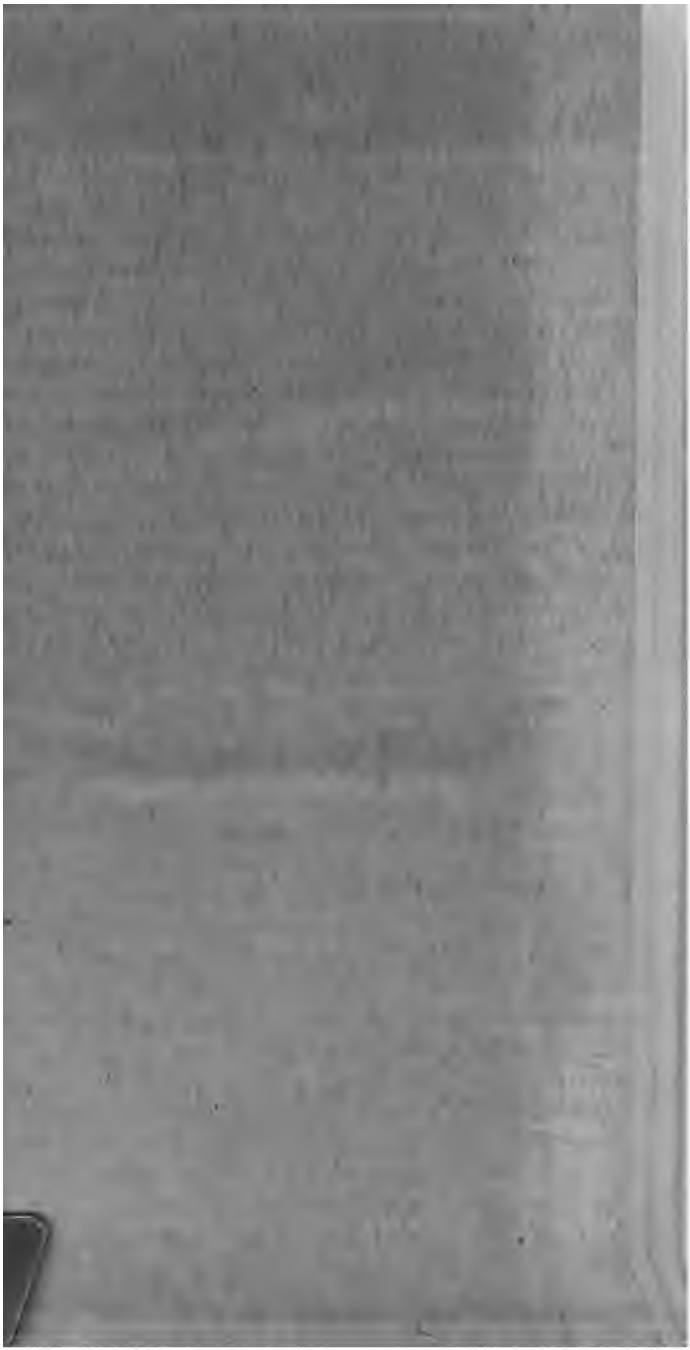
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ISABEL,

THE YOUNG WIFE

AND

THE OLD LOVE.

BY

JOHN CORDY JEAFFRESON,

AUTHOR OF "CREWE RISE," &c.

NEW YORK:

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TO

HENRY THOMPSON, ESQ., M.B., F.R.C.S.

My dear Thompson,—Though I am aware that the profession in which you are so actively engaged leaves you little time for the perusal of what is commonly called "light literature," I can not deny myself the pleasure of dedicating this novel to you, in the trust that you will regard my doing so as an honest, though faint expression of my affectionate admiration for your high attainments and generous nature, and of my gratitude to you for very many acts of friendship, which, I am delighted to think, can never be repaid by

Your very sincere friend,

John Cordy Jeaffreson.

ISABEL.

CHAPTER I.

CAPTAIN POTTER, OF KILVERTON.

CAPTAIN POTTER was not what is usually understood by a great man, and yet he was not without heroic elements. He was not great in stature, for five feet six inches exceeded his extreme height; neither was he great in mind, for his intellect bordered on the minute. His fortunes also were not great, for at no time of life was his income much more than a thousand pounds per annum. But he possessed the rare and enviable power of making his smaller companions have faith in the strength of his littleness, and his more influential neighbors respect his inferiority.

He was believed in for twelve miles round Kilverton as a complete British officer, who had done the nation important service, and had been mentioned in Wellington's dispatches, though the truth was, he had never been in any action with an enemy, and the only occasion of his name appearing in the great commander's reports is where it is stated, "a hundred mules under the convoy of Lieutenant Potter, of the Sixth, have arrived; they will be of service, for I am sadly in want of beasts of any kind, for carriage." When the battle of Waterloo brought peace to Europe, Lieutenant Potter found himself a captain, but compelled to quit the service, of which he was an ornament, on the modest half of a very stingy full pay. Returning to the neighborhood which saw his birth, he looked about with a view to fixing himself in life, and event-

ually, after patient endurance and perseverance, succeeded to his satisfaction. He was not one of those men who, with one stride, step to a respectable position on Fortune's ladder, but achieved by a series of little deeds that which very lucky mortals do with one stroke; he might be said to have had a tiny Jacob's ladder of his own running up by the side of Fortune's ascent, and to have indefatigably spent his existence hopping up the grades thereof, like an ambitious little cock-sparrow as he was, or, to indulge yet further in metaphor, he might be said to have never had a sack of apples given him at once, but was quite content to fill his bushel with windfalls.

He began life without a penny beyond his commission and outfit. How he got *them*, whether he picked them up in his youth, as he went on picking up other things afterward, whether his father bought them, whether he had a father to buy them, no one (that is, no one after he became prosperous) knew. Certainly, in a little village forty miles away from Kilverton, there lived a poor wheelwright who was prone to talk at the public house to the effect that his half-brother, Squire Potter, or Captain Potter, might as well be humble, for, if he was rich, his birth wasn't over-honest. But this was probably the scandal of a low fellow; and, if true, what of it? the abuse of the obscure is as ineffectual for good or for evil to gentlemen of Captain Potter's position as the prayers of the impenitent, or sarcasm in journals that no one ever reads.

At about forty years of age, our captain, who had settled himself in a cottage at Witherstone, the market town two miles distant from Kilverton, married the daughter of a neighboring clergyman, with a portion of three thousand pounds.

After giving her husband a child named Isabel, this lady died, and was interred in the church-yard of Witherstone, where her tomb may be seen. This event did not pass off

without gossip; the more so, because Mr. Garbidge, the Witherstone solicitor, whom Captain Potter never consulted on business matters, *happened to know* that the late Mrs. Potter's fortune was not settled on Isabel, but was the unfettered property of her father.

"Trust that man," said the legal functionary, with bitterness, "for keeping what's his own and getting what isn't.

For six years or more Captain Potter continued to inhabit his cottage, busying himself with the instruction of his little girl, and cultivating friendly relations of a sedate character with the families of his own rank near him. He was very polite to two maiden ladies at Woolverton, and was not less attentive to his old friend, Mrs. Chickerley, of Woodstraw Island. He collected rents for these ladies, sold their orchard produce for them, brought them the newest-invented eggs for their hens to sit on, executed commissions for them, and presided over their establishments; blowing up their men-servants, and keeping their butchers and bakers in order.

Miss Mira Felstead, of Woolverton, died—"without making a will," cried Mr. Garbidge, the very instant he heard of the event. But there was a will, though not of Witherstone manufacture, and Captain Potter was put down for a legacy of one thousand pounds. Mr. Garbidge said Parliament ought to take the matter in hand, and prevent such things. A few months, and the other Miss Felstead died. She also left a will, and in it bequeathed another one thousand pounds to her dear friend, Captain Potter. Mr. Garbidge heard, and—held his tongue. It never rains but it pours; Mrs. Chickerley, of Woodstraw Island, went after the Misses Felstead, leaving her much-valued friend, Captain Potter, five thousand pounds and the furniture of her house.

"It was beyond trifling, something must be done," said Mr. Garbidge; so he forthwith went into his green-house, and cut off bunches of the finest of his Muscatel grapes, and

sent them with a polite message of congratulation to the fortunate man.

Habit, philosophers tell us, is one of the most important laws of our nature; and society now contracted a habit of devising property to the captain. People conceived the notion that it was meet and right to do as the Misses Felstead and Mrs. Chickerley had done, and that no decent female character ought to quit the district for another world without making a trifling bequest to Captain Potter. Now he came in for a tea-pot, now for a chest of drawers, now for a ten-pound note.

Captain Potter was made a magistrate for the county. How he got into the commission no one could tell; the magnates of the land were well enough pleased to see him there; but the Reverend Stephenson Fulcher, an opulent, and thick headed rector, who was furious at not having obtained the same honor, growled out that it was a "job," and that there was such a thing as a qualification requisite. When the rector was informed that Captain Potter had the requisite property, and was already a justice of the peace, and sworn to behave as such, the good man shook his head, and, sneering vindictively, said he recollected the time when beggars were not so rich.

A county magistrate and the father of little Isabel, not more than eight years old, Captain Potter made a second alliance, taking as the companion of his fortunes the child of a deceased farmer. The lady was well educated for her rank of life, plain, though not painfully so, verging on forty years of age, of a delicate aspect and weak constitution, and with a fortune of twelve thousand pounds.

Thus had Captain Potter gradually increased in substance. For years he had quietly maintained his position at Witherstone, and at length moss had settled on and covered him. He now gave up his humble residence in the little town, and moved to a house in the parish of Kilverton. It was an erec-

tion of white brick, standing away from the high road, surrounded by a few very graceful trees, and with a small but elegant garden encircling it. There were forty acres of land attached to the dwelling, and for the purpose of farming these in the most approved style, the captain put himself into heavy laced boots and mud-colored trowsers.

When the next Christmas came, the readers of the county pocket-book were supplied, together with an abundance of charades, enigmas, rebuses, and whatever else such things are called, with engravings of half a dozen county-houses, among which was "Kilverton: the Residence of Godfrey Potter, Esquire, late a Captain of the Sixth Foot." Clearly the quality of England had received a new member.

But Captain Potter by no means presumed to put himself on a footing with the county aristocracy. He was assiduous in attendance at magistrates' meetings, and very energetic as a dispenser of justice, but he always paid homage to the chairman, and never differed in opinion with any one. Colonel Torringer, of the High House, Banbridge, soon began to call him "my dear Potter;" and when Sir Ellerton Knyvett, who thought it right, for county purposes, to be polite to the fellow, asked him to dinner, Captain Potter won the baronet's heart by saying, "No, no, Sir Ellerton, I am not going, at my time of life, to ride across the country to dine with great men whom I am not in a position to visit as an equal. So I decline your invitation; but some morning, when business takes me your way, I will call in at your lunch." Lady Ellerton Knyvett, on hearing this, said it was refreshing to find there were some people still left in the world who knew that modesty was not subservience.

Captain Potter, on removing to Kilverton, became respected far and near, and very popular in Witherstone. The inhabitants of that small city soon began to find many virtues in their old friend which they had not seen before; his martial bearing, his stern sense of duty, his disinterested patriot-

ism, were now perceived and appreciated. There was no mean worship of success in the good people, though it was the success that enabled them to worship. When they eulogized their captain, they really believed him to be all they said; and, not having longer memories than their neighbors of the great world, they were not perplexed with questioning how it came they had not found out their hero's worth before. The captain, on his part, fully gave in to the new state of things. When he took his diurnal progress through the little doll's-house streets of Witherstone to the news-room, it was a study to see him walk by the gazing windows with the air of the intrepid British officer, grasping the handle of his spudded stick firmly, as if it were a sword, and with his slight features firmly set. "It's all quiet here," his bearing seemed to say; "but just follow me round the corner, and there you will behold a scene of carnage over which British valor shall ride triumphant."

One morning, rather more than ten years after the captain had established himself at Kilverton, and about six times ten years from his advent into the world, he descended to his breakfast parlor, where his family were assembled at the morning meal. The day before had been spent by the captain on the outside of the mail-coach, which had deposited him late at night in the High Street of Witherstone, after having conveyed him from London, which centre of intelligence it was his custom to visit once a year for a fortnight. The journey had fatigued the captain, and had caused him to indulge in an extra half-hour's sleep; so, when he entered the parlor, the family prayers had been read by Mrs. Potter, and the servants, looking very much ashamed of their devotions, had retired.

"My children, God bless you!" he said, as he opened the door, and passed round to the fire-place.

This benediction was delivered to a party of five, consisting of Isabel, a beautiful girl just entering on her twentieth

year, and the four children of Mrs. Potter regnant. Of this second family the three eldest were boys, varying between the ages of ten and six, and the youngest was a cherry-cheeked little girl called Agnes.

The children looked very pleased at the sight of their parent, but they none of them quitted their places at the breakfast-table.

The captain put his back to the fire, brushed up with his hands some hair that was rather gray over a head that was rather bald at the summit, and pulled up his shirt-collar.

"Well, my dear," he at length said, turning to Mrs. Potter, who retained her seat near the coffee-pot, "what report have you to make?"

The eldest boy's eyes turned anxiously to his mother, and he breathed quickly till she said, in a solemn but not ungentle voice, "Very good, thank you, Godfrey. They have all been good children"—(and, after a pause)—"*very* good children."

"I am very glad to hear it," said the captain, eyeing his offspring as if they were a file of soldiers: "it gives me the greatest satisfaction to hear so good a character of you. Tommy, have you given the servants any trouble during my absence?"

Tommy, the eldest boy, turned red.

"He has been very good, Godfrey," said his mamma, coming to his relief.

"I'm glad to hear it." And then he added quickly, "And how has Isabel behaved?"

"Always well. She is always a good girl." But the answer was made in a voice which said plainly, "You see, Godfrey, how just I am to your child."

"Very satisfactory," responded the father. "Isabel, my love, come and kiss me."

A flush of pleasure crossed her face as she rose to obey; and when she threw her arms lightly across her father's shoulders, and put her pink lips to his, the long lashes of her brown eyes *glistened with tears.*

"We have missed you very much, papa," she said, with warmth. "I have taken my walks every day, because you told me, but I wanted you to make me enjoy them. Do you think you'll be able to take me out to-day?"

"I am afraid not to-day, my dear," he replied, still keeping his erect attitude. "I think I have a little commission for you to execute for me."

"Oh, thank you," said Isabel, gratefully.

She was fully convinced that her papa was the kindest and best, as well as the bravest man that ever lived. When the Witherstone people made court to her by praising him, she used to say, "Ah! but you can't know him till you see him at home."

Isabel was not taller for a woman than her father was for a man, but her slender and well-proportioned figure gave her the effect of height; and in her form as well as in her face there was an unusual combination of delicacy and strength. Her features were slight, and her oval face was favored with a complexion of as transparent a pink as English girl was ever endowed with, and that is saying no little. But the charm of her beauty was in her eyes, which had a complex expression of timidity and mirth.

"Well," said the father, playing with a ringlet of her hair, which was drawn off her forehead, "I have not forgotten you in my absence, for I have brought you home a present."

"What is it? I am very much obliged."

"I'll tell you by-and-by. Now go to your seat again."

Isabel retired with an expression of ineffable happiness in her face.

"Tommy," resumed the captain, in his word-of-command voice, "come and kiss me."

Tommy obeyed, and went back to his seat.

"Teddy, come and kiss your father."

Duty done.

"Frank, come, it's your turn—quick—sharp's the word."

Little Frank went through the ceremony, and then Captain Potter said to his youngest child, with the same starch gentleness he had manifested to his other daughter, "Now, little Aggy, come and give papa a kiss."

Little Agnes approached him gladly, but the papa did not bend down.

"Now you must kiss me—as I tell you," said he, looking at her with an expression meant to be intensely comic.

"You are such a great tall man," cried Agnes.

Every one burst out laughing, and Isabel exclaimed, "How droll you are, papa!"

Mrs. Potter put a chair near Agnes, who, taking the hint, clambered up it, and gave the salute amid more laughter.

"Now, children, no more noise," said the word-of-command voice. "Silence! silence! Begin breakfast."

Isabel, as a maiden of dignified years, partook of bread and butter her father cut for her, and an egg he especially recommended, she having nothing in common with the children. Isabel, moreover, had the privilege of conversing with her papa and mamma, whereas the children did not speak unless they were spoken to. These, and sundry other marks of dignity, had been conferred, together with a gold watch, on Isabel, two years before the time now treated of, after her confirmation.

"Have you any thing to tell about London?" asked Isabel.

"Not much, my love. The show in Covent Garden Market I do not think up to the mark, considering the season we have had, and how advanced we are in May. The potatoes, of course, were fine, the green peas too were not bad, but the asparagus was wretched; and there was scarcely a basket of early strawberries worth looking at."

It appeared that the captain had been to Covent Garden Market every morning, and to the House of Commons every night when there was any business going on. Isabel asked him if he went up to the Monument, or into the Thames

Tunnel; but it appeared he had not honored either of those places with a visit.

"Did you see your nephew, Hugh Falcon?" Mrs. Potter asked mechanically and also awkwardly, very much as if she had been told to put the question.

A little fresh color came into Isabel's cheek, and she raised her eyes with interest. The captain's countenance also became of a brighter hue, and the most irritable of the hairs in his head made demonstrations of readiness to change into the service of a porcupine.

"Worse—and worse, ma'am," said the captain, bitterly, and with that ferocity of commiseration with which we speak of the misdeeds and misfortunes of friends with whom we have quarreled. "Worse—and worse, ma'am. That young man has lived sinfully, and he will die wretchedly. I don't wish to judge harshly, but he will either commit suicide or die in a hospital."

"I was afraid it was so," sighed Mrs. Potter.

A cloud of trouble was on Isabel's face. "Is he indeed so bad, papa? Is his state so very abject?"

"Abject!" cried the captain, scornfully. "Ask him. He would laugh in your face. Oh no! now he is in the full career of profligacy, he is triumphant. Care can never reach him; want, hunger, starvation, a watery grave, can never reach him! Just let us wait a few years, and then, when his health has failed him, and his dissolute course has come to an end, let us hear what tune he will sing. Oh, now he is magnificent enough! Wanted me to dine with him at his club! He could give me first-rate Burgundy! And, as if this were not enough, offered to lend me his horse to ride on in the park?"

"Then he is not in immediate suffering. I am glad of that," said Isabel.

"So am I, my dear," responded her father, in a softened tone, watching her narrowly. "I was only fearing for him."

"He was always very kind to me. And he is very good-natured."

"Yes, my child; but good-nature can not be pleaded as an excuse for grave faults."

"Of course not—of course not, papa," Isabel replied, apologetically and sadly.

"And good-nature is often a fault itself. Bless me, I remember in the Peninsula," cried the captain, with the word-of-command voice rising again, "the Duke of Wellington sent a man to the right-about for being good-natured. A man of my company was out on an excursion with some comrades, when they saw a goose waddling about near a cottage. It struck the fellows they should like to have a stew for their supper, so they said to my good-natured friend, 'Shoot him, Bill;' and the man, although he knew there had been an express order issued the day before prohibiting pillage, was so good-natured that, just to oblige his companions, he fired at the goose—and shot it! Well, what do you think the duke did to this good-natured man?"

Every one was silent.

"Flogged him, you perhaps ask, Tommy?"

But Tommy didn't ask the question, but only blushed somewhat; for flogging was a delicate subject with Tommy, and a topic of conversation he disapproved of.

"No! *the duke had him shot!*"

"How cruel! how hard!" cried Isabel.

"It's a hard world we live in, my dear," returned the father, jauntily, quite put in good-humor by his ferocious anecdote.

"But I trust that Hugh Falcon won't shoot a duck," said Mrs. Potter, piteously. The good lady was not remarkable for seeing the point of a conversation.

"He has done bad enough already," answered the captain, bringing down his hand emphatically on the table with a bang. "He has written plays—and he has written novels.

Every possible chance has been given that young man, and every chance he has flung away. He was put into the navy, and the career of Collingwood or Nelson was before him; but no, he must quit a profession that offered no scope to his talents! He was then sent to Oxford—he might have become a bishop, or at least a college tutor; but no, ma'am, he could not submit to discipline—he was rusticated, and left the place in disgrace and debt! Then he went to the bar—he is a barrister. What does he do? Does he plod on in the steps of Lord Eldon? Nothing of the sort; he writes plays and novels!"

"But, though novels are not very clever things, and clever men ought not to spend their time in writing them," put in Isabel, extenuatingly, "still they are not all wicked. Now Pickwick—"

"Well," said her father, taking her up sharply, "what is that about?"

Isabel was taken aback, but managed to say, "About London and the people, and some pretty country places too."

"What would you say of London, forming your opinions from Pickwick?"

"Well! it must be a very funny place," Isabel answered, with a smile of humor and doubt, enough to make any man fall in love with her.

"There," cried her father, triumphantly, "just think of this. This is what Pickwick teaches. This is the best instruction that can be extracted from the best novel I know of—a harmless book, comparatively, or I should not have allowed you to read it. London a funny place! it is just the one thing it is not. Large, populous, wealthy, magnificent, well-lighted, ill-drained, rapidly-extending—but funny! Bless my soul, you might as well call me funny! My dear, I think you are talking rather too much. Go on with your breakfast."

The breakfast concluded without more conversation, and

after the children had said their graces, each in turn, the captain giving the word of command, the boys wheeled off to the school-room, to undergo instructions by a meagre tutor who visited Kilverton every day, and had his residence at Witherstone.

"Did you say, papa, you had a commission for me to execute?" Isabel asked.

"Yes, my love; I wish you to take a packet I brought from London, and a note, to Copley Rectory."

Isabel's face lighted with satisfaction. "Oh, that will be delightful."

The captain apparently was gratified with his daughter's pleasure. "Then you like going to Copley?" he inquired.

"Of course I do. Mr. Dillingborough is so very kind to me. I do not deserve it. But he is so very—very good."

"He is very good," said the captain, gravely and slowly.

"How shall I dress?"

The captain arranged every thing in his house.

"In your best walking-dress, with your new mantle."

It did not take Isabel many seconds to don her costume, and present herself for her father's approval before she started.

"You look very sweetly, my dear," said the captain, smiling proudly and affectionately. "But I think—yes—I should like that best. Just make one alteration. Change your collar and neckerchief, and wear the lace collar and silk scarf I gave you before I went to London.

Isabel thought her father rather more fastidious than usual, and then, without words, speedily did as she was bid.

"That will do," he said, when she again presented herself. "Here are the packet and note for Mr. Dillingborough, and here is the present I have brought you from town. It is a botanical work on the grasses of Australia, with beautiful illustrations."

Isabel's eyes were again bright with emotion. "Dear

papa, you are very kind to me. I try to pay you with my love, but that is not enough."

He kissed her very gently—quite naturally—without any of his starched magnificence, and assured her she had always been a joy to him, and that her happiness was ever a subject of his thoughts.

"But trip away, my child," said he, leading her to the front door, and letting her out into the garden. "It is a lovely morning; the sun is warm, and the birds are singing."

CHAPTER II.

THE RECTOR OF COPLEY CUM WITHERSTONE.

THERE was one person for whom the élite of Witherstone and its vicinity had a greater respect than even that in which they held the gallant lord of Kilverton. And this person was the Honorable and Reverend Harrie Dillingborough, the Rector of Copley cum Witherstone.

Whatever may be the faults of the Established Church of England, Ireland, and Wales, it unquestionably has a few good things, and of them the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough managed to obtain more than one. The annual value of the living of Copley was above one thousand three hundred pounds, and that of Witherstone above seven hundred pounds. Besides having the spiritual guidance and tithes of these two parishes, the rector had a canonry in a cathedral in the west of England which yielded him one thousand two hundred pounds per annum; and he also absorbed from the ecclesiastical endowments of the kingdom between two and three thousand a year as rector of one of the largest and wealthiest parishes in London.

The clergyman owed his good fortune in part to his powerful connections, and in part to talents which he possessed

in common with most of the members of his gifted family. At college he obtained a reputation for scholarship, and immediately after taking orders he edited two plays of Aristophanes. The reviews, penned by base-born scribblers, treated the editor's notes with contempt; but the Lord Chancellor entertained different views, and rewarded the young man by making him a London rector with upward of two thousand a year, which was not at all too much, considering what a great deal more Aristophanes, in all probability, got for writing the plays. Then came the livings of Copley and Witherstone, the presentation to which his noble father bought for him with the political influence of a borough, the seven voters in which, tenants of his lordship, sent two members to Parliament. This little negotiation was effected full thirty years before the time at which the history proper of these pages commences, and long before the Reform Bill had stabbed at the very heart of our institutions, and cut away a large portion of every Englishman's unquestionable right to do what he likes with his own. As the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough could not now be said to stand in need of a greater income, an inimical prelate, who wished to try him with the temptations of wealth, made him a canon of Brandon.

When the anti-Pluralist movement began, the Honorable and Reverend Harrie Dillingborough was one of those who were most ferociously attacked. For a long while he took no notice of his traducers, and allowed himself to be depicted as a wolf and a devourer without making a reply. Perhaps the Church afforded his wounded sensibility ample consolation. On one occasion, however, he responded to the "Mutual Illuminator," and most victoriously too, as he thought. The "Mutual Illuminator," after accusing him of overrepresenting his income to one set of government commissioners, when it was his interest to do so, and understating it to another set of commissioners, when it was his interest to appear as a poor and oppressed priest, went on to enumerate,

separately and collectively, the worth of his various preferments, and to enlarge on the duties which they each entailed on any conscientious clergyman.

Was such a state of things to be permitted to exist, which allowed Witherstone, a town with three thousand two hundred and twenty-five inhabitants—three thousand two hundred and twenty-five souls—to be without a resident rector? While Mr. Dillingborough was enjoying himself in the elegant retirement of Copley, or residing in the monastic seclusion of Brandon, or partaking in the festivities of fashionable life in the metropolis, what was the condition of Witherstone? And then the "Illuminator" went on to make out the condition of Witherstone to be very dark indeed, which, on the honor of an historian, it was not. A week elapsed; and then Mr. Dillingborough sent for publication, to that well-known journal, "The Orthodox Conservator," what he was pleased to head in emphatic characters, "The candid Statement of the Honorable and Reverend Harrie Dillingborough;" in which it was shown, *firstly*, that the livings of Copley and Witherstone always had, from time immemorial, been held together, and therefore ought forever to be united; *secondly*, that the income derived from Witherstone was barely seven hundred and ten pounds, instead of seven hundred and eighty pounds, as stated in the "Mutual Illuminator;" *thirdly*, that the population of Witherstone was three thousand and fifty souls, and not three thousand two hundred and twenty-five; and, *fourthly*, that the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough's total revenue from ecclesiastical sources was under five thousand five hundred pounds per annum, instead of being five thousand seven hundred and fifty pounds.

The writer went on to remark, in the mildest of courteous terms, that it was to be lamented that so good a cause as that of social progress (by which term he understood an earnest, and, to some extent, a successful endeavor to remove evil things and *to correct evil persons*) should be endangered

by individuals attacking sacred institutions, and making statements at variance with fact.

The "Mutual Illuminator" rejoined in a flippant, not to say ribald manner, making great fun of the dogma "what always has been, always ought to be;" and asking what difference it made whether Witherstone contained one hundred and seventy-five souls more or less than they stated?

The rector closed the contest with another communication to the "Orthodox Conservator;" briefly remarking that, in his eyes, as a priest of the Establishment, if one soul was of vital importance, much more so were one hundred and seventy-five souls. He concluded with trusting that the public would see that a clamor had been raised by a designing and anonymous writer about an abuse that did not exist; and in a postscript he added a quotation from the works of a distinguished moral philosopher, who is read with much attention at our universities, maintaining the fitness and propriety of pluralism. The friends of "The Orthodox Conservator" were triumphant, and asserted that the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough had effectually repelled the slanderous attack.

Witherstone, however, was a good, honest little town, not overgiven to speculation and dissent, and it believed in its rector. It delighted in having so magnificent a parson that he only visited them for two months a year, and then resided in an elegant mansion in the adjoining parish, to which he did not deign to invite any of his humble neighbors, not even his own curates; it felt pride in the bright liveries resplendent with silver lace, and the town-built carriage and spanking bays that dashed through the market-place, bearing to or from Copley Rectory a noble lord who had been passing a few days with the rector, or the rector's son, Captain Dillingborough, R.N., who would shortly save England's honor untarnished and be made a peer, and be put on the top of a column. The exciseman of the district, an infidel rascal, who had no faith in the government he served, certainly

sneered at the equipage, and asked if St. Peter had a drag of that sort; but his views were held to be detestable. The Witherstone public would not have been so tolerant and complacent had their pastor been less than the great man he was; for just the other side of the county, where an ordained Crœsus, in the shape of an opulent tradesman's son, attempted to play Captain Grand over his parishioners and the neighborhood, the entire district revolted, the minor gentry cutting him, and the populace deriding him.

The Radical journal of the county pointed to the contrast, and taunted the Witherstone people for not rebelling in like manner. Were they bound by such a servile admiration of "the sounding nicknames of the vainly great," that they could submit to that from a lord's son which they would not bear at the hands of a plebeian? It was not dignified of Witherstone, but still not so base as the Liberal organ tried to prove it to be; for the Witherstonians, in their romantic visions of this planet, had a belief that England was the noblest country in it; that her nobles were of the best and most comely of her inhabitants; that England's great metropolis, with its vastness of wealth, and power, and refinement, was the wonder of the entire globe; that England's queen reigned therein, surrounded in her court by the high-born, the brilliant, the wise, and the beautiful. To the Witherstone mind, the pictures of the court pageants, the royal processions to Westminster, and the reviews in Hyde Park, in the sheets of the Illustrated London News, were matters of grave history and dazzling fact. And of all this earthly glory, the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough was to Witherstone the representative, for the district round about contained none so great as he, the land being portioned out for the most part into small estates, the property of yeomen, and the few large estates that there were being in the hands of trustees for charitable uses. Loyalty and poetry threw a halo around the rector.

The morning was bright and balmy, if ever May morning was, when Isabel tripped down the Kilverton avenue, proceeded, with the blood playing music in her cheeks, down Kilverton Hill, under the shadow of the high firs that grew on either side, and on reaching Priest's Paddock turned over a stile to go by the meadows to Copley Rectory. Before starting forward again, after having crossed the stile, she paused for a minute to look behind her at Witherstone, which lay in the distance, resting on the sides of two modest hills, dimly picturesque in the gleaming mist which was bearing the scent of flowers and Maythorn up to the sun, a grateful incense to that which gave them life. The spire of the church shone like a line of varnished silver; a freshness was in the breeze, a frosty crispness dallied with the warmth of the day; and Isabel was very happy. The momentary depression she had experienced on hearing of the evil courses of her cousin Hugh had given way to the genial influences of the morning, and she caught herself singing the burden of a little song she had been teaching Agnes.

"Is Mr. Dillingborough at home? and can he see me?" she asked, modestly, of an astounding footman in a pantry jacket, who opened the door of the Rectory in answer to her summons.

Mr. Dillingborough was at home, and would doubtless see Miss Potter. Would she walk into the drawing-room? Isabel complied, and, having entered the apartment, was soon engaged in admiring all the beautiful things it contained; the rare pictures, the wonderful Chinese toys, the gorgeously illustrated books. She was disturbed in a few minutes by the opening of the door, and the entry of a tall, handsome man, considerably over sixty years of age, in clerical costume, gray-headed, and of a venerable aspect. One of the chief constituents of the old man's good looks was a healthy brightness of complexion.

Isabel advanced with trepidation to meet the great man, and began, "Papa *has sent* me with—"

"Before you tell me what business you are come on," Mr. Dillingborough interrupted her, with a polite and deferential voice, "let me thank you, my dear Miss Isabel, for coming to see me. It is very kind of you, for I have no friends with me, and for the last fortnight I have been a solitary."

Mr. Dillingborough was a widower, with two children, a son and daughter. His son, Captain Dillingborough, R.N., was a member of Parliament, and resided almost always in or near London; his daughter had married (which her brother had not), and was abroad with her husband, who held a high diplomatic appointment in the south of Europe.

"But I don't think I will be so grateful to you till I have first called you to account," resumed Mr. Dillingborough, gallantly. "Why have you not been to see me for these last fourteen days? You see I keep an accurate list of my lonely days."

"Papa has been in London," Isabel answered, evidently pleased with the compliment, "so he has not been at home to send me, and so—I had nothing to come for."

"Nothing to come for! Nothing to come for!" was the playful answer. "Is that the most flattering reply you can make to my telling how glad I am to see you?"

"Of course I should have liked to come," Isabel corrected herself quickly and with simplicity; "I always like very much to come. But I did not, because I knew your time to be always fully occupied, and I was afraid of your—"

"Afraid of me!" exclaimed Mr. Dillingborough, again willfully taking a wrong meaning.

Isabel was uneasy at the banter. "Please, Mr. Dillingborough," she petitioned, "do not misunderstand me. Do not take wrongly what I mean rightly."

"I do not misunderstand you, my dear child," said the old man, gently, and looking earnestly at her. "I understand you; and you are a very good girl."

"I try to be so," Isabel said, in a whisper.

"But come," Mr. Dillingborough said, in an altered voice, after a pause; "don't you bring any thing besides that parcel and note? Have you no message from any of my young friends? Have you no love from Agnes?"

"Oh yes," Isabel answered, with a good merry laugh that made her companion's eyes sparkle. "She told me to ask you to come over to Kilverton and kiss her. She says she likes being kissed by you, because you do not rub her face with your prickly chin, as papa does."

The rector laughed. "The little rogue! Tell her I will avail myself of the invitation."

He now opened the note, and read it, and broke the seal of the packet. After glancing at its contents, he put it aside, and said, "Now, Isabel, if you have rested sufficiently after your walk, you must come with me and inspect my flowers, which have got on prodigiously since you saw them last. And you shall tell me if my gardener is doing as he ought."

While speaking, he rose and opened the French window, and let in the fresh air from the garden. Isabel rose also, and followed him out of the house. After taking a turn or two on the lawn, remarking on the general aspect of the grounds, the beds brightening into blossom, and the trees bursting into greener and more luxuriant foliage, they went into the conservatories, where the most gorgeous and odoriferous exotics were ablaze with every variety of brilliant hue.

The rector and Isabel were both fond of flowers, and understood horticulture, so they had ample material for conversation.

When they had looked at and approved every thing, Mr. Dillingborough took a knife from his pocket, and proceeded to cut a bouquet for his visitor. So liberally disposed was he, that Isabel, when she had watched him for some minutes culling all the choicest bunches of blossom, was forced to exclaim against his prodigality. "You may not give me so many and such fine ones—you'll leave none for yourself."

"They are not finer than you deserve," was the quiet answer.

"But I shall not be able to carry them."

"Then the gardener shall."

When the bouquet was completed and tied up by Mr. Dillingborough's own hands, in the most artistic manner, Isabel took it with many thanks, and prepared to depart.

"Must you leave me so soon?"

"I may not stop any longer. It will take me an hour to walk home, and papa will not like me to be late at our one o'clock dinner."

"Well, I hope the exercise of returning will do you as much good as that of coming here has done—the morning's 'out' has brightened you." And then, after a pause, he added deliberately, not at all as if paying a compliment, but as if he were speaking to himself, "You are very, very beautiful—very, very beautiful."

Isabel extended her hand to him. He took it, pressed it affectionately to his lips, and said, "Farewell, my little sunlight."

Isabel, on her way home, had plenty to think about. She turned over in her mind all that she and the rector had said (for the bulk of their conversation has, of course, not been transcribed); how he had told her what a joy his son was to him, and how he hoped she would one day know more of Captain Dillingborough; how he had responded to her question of whether he thought there were flowers in heaven by saying that he doubted not there were, if they were calculated to add to the happiness of the blessed; and how he had begged her not to be fourteen days again without coming to see him. Then she determined what she would do with her flowers; that they should be put in state in a certain china basin, for which she had a great respect, in the centre of the drawing-room table, with the exception of a few for her father's dressing-room, and just a wee sprig she would reserve for her own toilet-table.

She was a few seconds late at dinner, but her father was not angry. "Never mind, my dear," he said, in answer to her apologies; "never mind. It's a long distance, and doubtless you found Mr. Dillingborough very entertaining." But, just to maintain discipline, the captain told her to take pains with her carriage, and be careful how she held her shoulders. "Now the right shoulder is about an eighth of an inch higher than the other—and it's a leetle, just a leetle stuck forward."

Isabel made the required alterations.

"Ah! that's better—very much better. It's a matter of no small importance, I can assure you. If a girl doesn't know how to hold herself as a girl, it's ten to one she won't know how to conduct herself when she is a woman. Frank! if ever I see you again put your knife into your mouth, I'll read the riot-act over you, and teach you what it is to disobey your father's commands."

Immediately after the repast, the captain said he must walk over his farm and "see his men." He had on his forty acres of land only two men, and certain very juvenile members of humanity; but to hear him talk of taking his men on and putting them off, made the listener think him the employer of an indefinite number of servants.

In the evening of that day, after the children had retired to bed, under the protection of their mother, and when Isabel, having seated herself in a good position near the lamp, whereat her father was reading a newspaper, had opened her new book on Australian grasses, she was startled by the captain laying down his paper, and saying he wished to speak to her on a very important subject.

"I have been spending this afternoon with our dear friend, Mr. Dillingborough."

Isabel looked frightened.

"Don't be alarmed, Isabel."

"He is not angry with me about any thing?"

"No, no. Come and have some secret talk with me."

He rose, and, putting his arm round her waist, led her to a sofa in a darkened corner of the room.

"Dear father, what is it?"

He spoke to her in a low tone, and she listened, without moving, to his words. "What!" she cried, with astonishment, when she had heard all; "what! to be his wife?"

"Surely. Do you love him?"

"Oh, very much," she answered, in a bewildered manner.

"How much?" inquired the father, with a smile.

"Almost as much as I do you."

"You must love him more than that."

"So I shall—now it's right," Isabel replied, earnestly. "But what am I to do? What have I done that all this should happen to me? I am not fit. I am not worthy! He is so very good! And I to be so exalted!"

The tears came very fast to her relief as she threw herself on her father; and he, taking her in his arms, nursed her and comforted her as he had often done when she was a baby.

CHAPTER III.

ISABEL'S NEW FRIEND.

THE children, on being informed that their sister Isabel was engaged, and was about to be married, and to be no less a person than the Honorable Mrs. Harrie Dillingborough, expressed their delight or surprise in various speeches, which their mother cherishes to this day. Tommy, whose mature years had given him certain vague notions of property, exclaimed, "Hurrah! then the carriage and horses, and all the other things, will be ours." Frank took an opportunity to sidle up to his sister, and to say, with a beseeching smile, "I suppose, Bel, dear, you'll let me ride on the pony?" Little

Agnes thought over the intelligence in silence for many hours, and eventually remarked, "Isabel going to be Mr. Dillingborough's wife! how funny! I wonder if her hair will turn white." On being asked what she meant, the young lady responded curtly and somewhat sullenly, "Why, his is!"

The news created much more commotion within the walls of Witherstone. Honestly, the members of that community did not like their captain's undreamed of elevation. It was a social step above them, which he had no business to have taken. Fancy that little Isabel going to be one of the aristocracy! Latent jealousies sprung forth and burgeoned, and the captain's dynasty was in danger. Mr. Garbidge, now grown an old and feeble man—almost, in fact, grown into a coffin—was the only person in the town at all pleased. He indeed chuckled over his acuteness, and said, "What did I tell you from the first?" The ladies generally were very indignant with what they were pleased to call the rector's forgetfulness of his dignity, and they were equally infuriated with the artful scheming and heartlessness of Captain Potter. Mrs. Pringle, who led the more fashionable ladies in all matters of morality and social decorum, was vehement. "How could he have the ordinary feelings of a father, and compel that poor child to marry a man old enough to be her great-grandfather?"

But this Dr. Pringle could not allow. He remembered the fees Captain Potter had paid him at the birth of Isabel, and at the birth of each of the other four children; he recollected the profitable attendance he made on the first Mrs. Potter during her dying illness, how he had seen the captain's entire family through croup and measles, and how he might, if he did not waver in his allegiance, protect them through the dangers of whooping-cough and scarlatina.

"Mrs. Pringle," the doctor cried energetically, "this I can not allow; Potter has been my firm friend and my fast

friend"—(the doctor did not use *fast* in an immoral sense) —"and I won't hear envy carping at him without proclaiming my sentiments. Potter is a gallant fellow. He has served his country in the field of battle. His blood has been shed—"

"Yes, my dear," put in Mrs. Pringle, tartly—"when you have bled him."

"And I do verily believe," continued the doctor, not noticing the interruption, and throwing a thrilling solemnity into his voice—"*And I do verily believe*, if there is one man on earth who has a stern sense of duty, it is Godfrey Potter."

"I am sure he manifests it, my dear," put in Mrs. Pringle, with a small excoriating laugh "by the way in which he performs his *duty* to his daughter."

"Madam," screamed the doctor, "I order you to be silent. I will not hear such observations from your lips with regard to a man who has fought England's battles—has been mentioned in Wellington's dispatches, and has braved death and won glory at the cannon's mouth." And the doctor went into such a lively rage that Mrs. Pringle, fearing he might work himself into an apoplexy, like a dutiful wife changed her opinions, and set about arguing to the Witherstone public in favor of the captain and the impendent wedding.

In the country the excitement was very great. There were more than two ladies in the land who had employed all their charms and talents to accomplish that which Isabel had undesignedly achieved. Indeed, the rector had been the veritable bull's-eye at many an archery party—a fish that had been baited with every fly that artifice had invented. Widows had raced for him neck and neck—and so had maiden ladies, whom mature years had taught to appreciate the bliss of unwedded life. "Who is this Captain Potter?" they exclaimed, haughtily. But that was very absurd, for every one knew the captain; he permeated the entire county on his

bay charger, dropping in to lunch (according to his promise to Sir Ellerton Knyvett) at every house in turn—he was the grand newsduct of the region which he traversed, discharging many of the functions of the postman and the classic herald. One of the rector's suitors cried hysterically, "He might have married a lady, but he has chosen—a Potter."

Captain Dillingborough was certainly not pleased with the letter that announced his father's intention to marry again. He was offended with it on more grounds than one. For matrimony, under any circumstances, he had no profound veneration; but that a man should marry for a second time, and after he had entered on old age, appeared to him an indication of mental imbecility. He considered the fact as clearly proved that his parent's mind was fast approaching decay. Had his father taken to hunting in pink, or made his appearance at St. James's in a cardinal's hat, the captain would not have more commiserated his condition. The son pitied his poor father; and with him, pitying a Dillingborough was the same as being ashamed of him.

Moreover, Captain Dillingborough reflected that his father's income was only for his life, and that his accumulated property, though it was estimated by the knowing in such matters as considerable, would not be a very satisfactory estate for him (Captain Dillingborough, M.P.) to inherit if a fresh family had to be provided for out of it. But none of these considerations escaped the captain's lips, either to his father or to any of his personal friends; for, as a son, he did not think it dutiful or prudent to expostulate with his father on the subject; and as to imparting his feelings to others, his pride would not allow him to prattle about the mesalliances any of the Dillingboroughs might make.

In spite of rumor, which represented Isabel as an unwilling sacrifice to worldly ambition, never was there girl married in a more complete stupor of love. The more passionate powers of her heart and imagination had never been called

into play by literature (for poetry and trash her father had never permitted her to read), nor had they been aroused by society, for she had not an intimate friend beyond her father's walls. That good Mr. Dillingborough, who examined her for confirmation, who gave so liberally to the poor, who was so very, very good—that handsome, courtly Mr. Dillingborough, who paid her so much attention, and for whom her father had such an earnest admiration—was the man she adored. He was priest and king to her. On receiving his offer, the difference in their ages had never occurred to her; nor had she wasted a thought on it till Agnes reminded her that his hair was white, and hers was not.

The wedding ceremony was duly performed at Kilverton in the month of August following the proposal. It was very unostentatiously managed; the Dean of Brandon came over to officiate, and Captain Dillingborough came down from town to be present on the inauspicious occasion; and these, with two young ladies, slight acquaintances of Isabel's, who discharged the offices of bridemaids, were the only guests invited to attend. None of the Witherstone people were asked to come and rejoice, but they were not uninformed of the Kilverton arrangements.

Captain Dillingborough was distantly polite and cordially frigid to his new mamma, who was not slow to feel the chill of his manner, and instinctively to perceive that it was the sincere language of his heart. He, however, thought he behaved admirably, and rendered most honorably all service due for the one thousand pounds which his father had presented to him a few days previously as a token of affection, and a sign that his interests were not to suffer from the great event. Isabel also received shortly before her marriage a letter from Lady Angerfield, the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough's daughter, who was residing abroad. It commenced in the anticipatory form with "My dearest mamma," and concluded with "Your affectionate daughter, Julia

Angerfield;" still it was a formal production, and did not afford much satisfaction to Isabel, who was compelled to reflect that its writer was fifteen years her senior. In all probability, she would not have been more gratified by the billet had she known it was, like Captain Dillingborough's formal urbanity, only the receipt in full for a thousand pounds her scrupulously just and very indulgent father had sent her.

The rector took his young wife abroad for their wedding excursion, first up the Rhine, and then to Florence, considering, with patriarchal kindness, that it would be good for her unformed mind to see something of foreign countries. They returned to England before Christmas, and taking possession of the rector's pastoral residence, a grave but somewhat magnificent house in a retired square nigh Westminster Abbey, entered into society—a grand, decorous, and not over-lively society—which to Isabel's unsophisticated mind was one unbroken whirl of dissipation. Isabel was presented to her majesty by the Duchess of Balbriggan, causing no slight sensation by her beauty among the radiant lovelinesses of St. James's, and not a little gossip and prattling laughter in the clubs, whose members were amused by the contrast between her and her venerable husband. And she had to receive visitors—only at small and quiet parties, however; and very grateful was she that they were small and quiet. A life of great effort, full of trials she had not thought of during the tumultuous days of wooing, was this exalted existence.

At first she was painfully ignorant of the topics of conversation, and could not command the society tone her new acquaintances possessed. She was also very sensitive at being the mark of much observation and curiosity, which, under the circumstances, were natural enough, but pained her as much as if they had been impertinent and expressed with ill-breeding. Some of the ladies who made her acquaintance

were bitingly ceremonious, and let her see they offered attention to the Dillingborough family, and not to her; even her beauty did not mollify these haughty dames. The only person who displayed any warmth of affection to her was Lady Crayford, a niece of the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough's. Very handsome and elegant, though nigh forty, and inclined to *embonpoint*, with a reckless, defiant, almost insolent pride in her dark eyes, was this Lady Crayford. Isabel did not at all like her the first time she saw her, and positively shuddered as she heard her pour forth her taunts and sarcasm on men and things, like red-hot nails and ragged pieces of cast iron. Her ladyship had no establishment in town, but was spending a few weeks with members of the Dillingborough clan in Eaton Square; and she paid several visits to her child-aunt, as she was pleased to call Isabel to her face.

"I am going to Wolton to-morrow, and have only three minutes for you, but I would come to say good-by to you," she said one morning, running into Isabel's drawing-room. "My children have been enjoying themselves very much in my absence, and Lord Crayford has been positively happy; but it is necessary that I return, to keep up appearances, and prevent our neighbors from declaring I and my lord are separated."

"I hope I shall see you in the country. Wolton Hall is not more than thirty miles from Brandon."

"Not twenty; but there is a gulf between the two places that you won't be able to swim over—a good turbulent feud. Uncle Harrie won't speak to Lord Crayford."

"Whose fault is it?"

"Nobody's. Of course it is not mine, and *of course* it is not my husband's, and of course not yours. Why, the simple truth is, my husband is a ranter—preaches in the fields, and is a good man in a very sinful way, so my uncle—that is, your husband—won't know him."

"And he has not quarreled with you?"

"Bless me, no! people never break with those they are afraid of. He does not love me, but he does what is next best—he fears me. You think it strange I should keep on terms with a man who does not approve of Lord Crayford's proceedings? Well, perhaps you are right. But in all other respects I am an exemplary wife. You should see me at Wolton! But then—there is no merit in honoring such a man as my lord."

"Don't gibe so," Isabel said, quickly. "And never again to me speak so—so disrespectfully of your uncle."

"There, now, aunt, you are exquisitely lovely; do always be angry."

But Lady Crayford stopped short in her banter as she saw the expression of Isabel's face. The eyes of it were bright, but not with tears (for Isabel had since her marriage learned the art of restraining them, albeit her heart did not glow less frequently), and the lips of it were working very threateningly.

"Isabel, don't be angry. Forgive me, my dear girl, I was very wrong," cried her ladyship, kissing the indignant lips as she spoke. And then she added very earnestly, "I did not mean to vex you; but I have lived so many years in the habit of knocking people about, that I forget all are not made of wood."

Aunt Harrie Dillingborough returned the embrace with a vehemence the sincerity of which could not be questioned.

"Isabel," continued her friend, "you're a noble-hearted girl. Do try to think well of me, and love me; you'll hear much to my discredit that is not true, for ill luck has given me even more enemies than I have made. I admire you very much, and I feel for your troubles, which must be not a few. You are in a strange position; but keep a good heart, and your lot will not be an unhappy one—anyhow, brighter than mine. I can't remain with you now, so let me kiss you once more, and I'll go."

Isabel was not sorry when she was informed by her husband that they were to leave London for Brandon without delay. The transit was made so that the first anniversary of the day on which Mr. Dillingborough proposed to her was spent in their house in the Cathedral-yard of Brandon. Isabel was charmed with the place at first sight, and she grew to love it dearly—more and more—year by year. The picturesque High Street, with the antique town hall standing with its projecting gables supported by pillars—the cheerful little squares, green with trees—the smart, bright shops, and the merry clatter of the busy parts of the city, gratified her scarcely less than did the grand old Cathedral, on which ages had looked. The front windows of her house commanded a good view of the sacred building, and at the back of it was a spacious garden, encircled by a dark monastic wall, as fresh with green and as bright with flowers as the grounds of the Copley Rectory.

They had not established themselves many days at Brandon when Mr. Dillingborough was obliged to pay a visit to Oxford. Isabel was to remain at home alone during his absence; but it so happened that her period of widowhood was enlivened by a visit from her son. Without any announcement, Captain Dillingborough presented himself in the house —was surprised to find that his father was not at home—had taken it into his head to run down and see him.

The morning after his arrival, he entered the breakfast-parlor at about ten o'clock, and found Isabel in the daintiest of light morning dresses, seated at the table waiting for him.

Approaching her respectfully, he made an apology for being so late, and taking her proffered hand, gave her a filial kiss on her forehead, at which salute the red light mounted to her cheek.

"Any letter from my father this morning, mamma?" inquired he, when he had taken his place at the breakfast board and received a cup of coffee from her hands.

"None. So we may expect to see him home to-night."

"It must be very dull for you to be here alone without him."

"I like him, of course, best to be with me. But the time does not hang heavy on my hands, for I have a good deal to do."

"But you can't go out."

"Oh yes—to the Cathedral. I have been there this morning."

"Do you often attend the early service?"

"Every morning, since I have been here, I have been at it. I like it so very much; the music and the prayers soothe and compose me for the day."

"Do you then rise from your pillow in a tumultuous state?" As he put this last question, he smiled in his best way, endeavoring to garb his contemptuousness in polite humor—very ineffectually.

Isabel did not answer, but contented herself with staring at him with her large dark eyes, that had lost much of their timid expression, and acquired an air of pensiveness.

They talked but little for the next half hour, and that little was about the contents of the newspapers; and then, breakfast concluded, Isabel opened the glass door of the apartment, and invited her son to walk out with her in that green, leafy, bright tree garden, which, it has already been said, was at the back of the house.

Isabel was by no means without energy of character, and now she was about to display it. She was in a strange land, and among strange people, and she longed to make herself loved in it and by them. A want of sympathy impelled her to talk frankly to her husband's son, and show him how she needed and deserved affection.

Bowing an acceptance of her invitation, he followed her into the garden, where a warm sun was quickening the vegetation.

Captain Dillingborough was a man who had made something of a reputation. Using the navy, like our friend Captain Mugglestonleugh, "as a convenience," he had acquired sufficient distinction in it to make it sure that, with his powerful friends, he would be employed whenever he wished—that is, whenever an opportunity for high advancement occurred. He had invented some improvements in the appliances of men-of-war, which the Admiralty had adopted; a fact which, if it did not speak much for the merit of the inventions, said a great deal for his influence. Handsome and distinguished in person, even for his singularly handsome family—stern to his inferiors, haughty to his equals, reserved to the great, yet courted and even popular—with a snaky coldness in his eye, and a snaky cunning in his lips—polished and keen as a sword, and with scarce more feeling, yet gifted with winning ways when it was his humor to please—with just enough heart to be an accomplished voluptuary and a master of selfishness—looking on high-born dullards as one with the common herd of the ignoble, and looking on the common herd—not with contempt, but regarding them as valuable, inasmuch as they were useful machines to greatness—waiting patiently till the time came for him to strike, and make his name great, and in the mean time amusing himself with his passions, toying with them, critically admiring them as we might a cage of tigers, and running no more risk of being hurt by them than the stone does of bleeding under the knife it sharpens—such was Captain Dillingborough, M.P., from whom Isabel wanted sympathy and support.

Fancy the ivy saying to the oak, "Come down, for I want to embrace you!" and fancy the oak obeying.

"You asked me just now if my life was such a tumultuous one that I stood in especial need of the consolations of religion. You spoke in mockery—not of me, for I do not think you would wantonly grieve me, but of those sacred subjects which ought to be very precious to us. Perhaps it is

not a tempest driving me to pray for deliverance from danger, but a fear that my weakness may not be equal to manage my vessel in the calm, that inclines me to be more earnest—more regular in my applications to God."

Captain Dillingborough looked surprised, but not as if he found Isabel's words ungrateful.

"This last year," she continued, after a brief silence, "has been a very important one to me. I am much older than I was a few months since, when you saw me at Kilverton on my wedding-day. Of course, all girls are made much wiser by marriage, gain larger and startling views of life, and quickly acquire new opinions—some yeilding nothing but pleasure, some saddening. This has been peculiarly my case. I was very young when your father told me he loved me. I knew nothing of the world, had read hardly any thing, had never formed an attachment for any being out of my own family, with the exception of your father; him I loved—as I now know the world will never give me credit for. He was my spiritual guide, whom I had ever been instructed to venerate; he, from my earliest childhood, displayed a tender care for me, and—as I do him now—he loved me. I was an unsophisticated child, had scarce read a novel, had never been to a ball or theatre, or heard a line of Byron; but I have of late acquired much information in the forms and the errors of life."

"And not in the virtues?"

"Yes—yes: I would not have you misunderstand me. If my words are despondent and bitter, I would not have them imply what you suggest. There is—there must be—goodness in the world; but virtue is more frequently crowned with thorns than I had imagined. Do not think my disposition ungrateful because I speak dejectedly. There are many difficulties before me that can not be well overrated, which I saw not in my prospect before I married. It never occurred to me that I should be regarded with supercilious amusement by the society so much higher than my birth entitled me to, into

which my husband has introduced me; that I should be esteemed as an adventurous intruder into a circle far above me; or that my husband's children would distrust me, and be jealous of me."

"Do not, do not—" commenced the captain.

"Nay, you can not deny that I am speaking as truly as I am sincerely," Isabel checked him by calmly saying. After a pause, she added, "Frederick, I beg you not to misconstrue me. I have an unusual career before me; the duties, the trials, the possible usefulness, the rewards of it rise out dimly before me. I am not disheartened, for I am happy in the love of a good man—the only man I ever loved; I am hopeful for the future, but I shall require the encouragement and regard your father's children can give me."

"My dear mamma, do not doubt my good will toward you. In me you shall always find the observance of all that duteous affection which a son ought to bear to a mother."

"It can not be. You are not my son; it would be impossible to make you look on me as your mother; it would be easier for you to feel that I am your child," Isabel replied, with a sad smile. "Have confidence in me as your friend. That is sufficient dignity for me. A tremor of fear runs through me when you gravely call me 'mamma.' It sounds like heartless ridicule."

She was very earnest in her appeal; and as she concluded, her words were hurried, as if she was on the point of sobbing.

Frederick Dillingborough was affected. Commiseration for the perplexity of the young creature by his side, admiration of her exquisite grace, approval of her courage in so addressing him, and of the tact with which she did it, recognition of her good, sound intelligence, her simplicity, her excellence of intention, and of her helplessness, compelled him to pass sentence on her mentally to this effect: "What a noble child it is! How hard that she should suffer so for the folly of *my* father, and the wretched knavery of *hers!*"

Taking up the hand which she had placed beseechingly on his arm, he kissed it, saying, "We must learn to appreciate each other. I have not as yet done you justice, but I will learn to do so, and you will not be unfair in your judgment of me."

From that time Isabel and her new friend got on easy terms with each other; he manifesting in a hundred appropriate forms deference to her, and she not being slow to respond. He began to write to her occasionally chatty letters of family news, such as he knew would be acceptable; and this line of conduct on the part of his son pleased no little the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough, who rejoiced at what he termed "this cementing of family ties."

Summer passed, autumn came, and, ere winter had arrived, Isabel went through that state which men are prone to speak of with levity, and ladies are so egotistical as to term "interesting," and became the mother of the sweetest, loveliest little boy the Dillingboroughs had ever produced. If ever there has been an exultingly triumphant father, the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough, with his eyes raining down over his manly, vigorous old face, as he gazed on the child of his old age, was one.

The boy was born in Brandon, in which place also the christening was celebrated. Frederick Dillingborough was present at these festivities, having come down from town for that purpose.

"Frederick," said Isabel, in the chamber to which she had taken the captain on the evening of his arrival to see her child, sleeping soundly and cozily, "I said you could not be my son. But you can be my boy's brother."

CHAPTER IV.

EVERITT BROOKBANK.

It is in the early days of September, and that sweltering hot weather prevails which usually opens September in England in a not positively intolerable degree, but which is only found in its demoniacal intensity across the Channel, and there roasts and parches no plain, from Normandy to the Mediterranean, with more delight than it does the arid, sandy level from which springs Paris—one vast, magnificent fountain, sparkling in the sun. There is a slight breeze stirring, but it comes straight from the mouth of an unseen furnace, and instead of bringing refreshment, serves only to raise the fine dust from the ground, mingling it with the air which men must breathe—or die. What little grass there is around Paris has denied its own vegetation, and taken upon itself the torpid aspect of used-up and pulled-out door-mat. A jet of water darting forth from a griffin's mouth is a cruel sarcasm, a mechanical gibe, at the operations of Nature.

Why do not the Parisians keep within doors, or, as it is Sunday, attend service in the churches, and retire from them along the shady sides of the streets, to pass the remainder of the day with their families? Why, now that the flowers are unable to enjoy themselves, and stinging insects buzz venomously about, thirsting for blood, do smart grisettes (as they mayn't nowadays be called) and their appropriate cavaliers flow out from every court, and street, and by-way, on their way to one particular route of omnibuses and one particular railway station? Why are the Boulevards near the Madeleine, the Rue de Rivoli, and the Place de la Concorde in such commotion, with hundreds of people running over each

other (to get places on the omnibuses that are in sight, and can not accommodate a tithe of those requiring their services), and with gentlemen and ladies bargaining against each other for voitures; some vociferating in French, some in English, some in neither and both at the same time—the ladies, in the excitement of the moment, omitting to be feminine, and the gentlemen forgetting to be gallant? What is it all about? The fête surely of St. Annette! of St. Annette, not sixteen miles from the great obelisk, with its wide streets usually deadly calm, but this day to be merry as youth, with its great deserted mansions, whose gloomy decay is mocked by the freshness of the grass and evergreens in the courts they encompass! St. Annette, with its royal palace, its forest, and its fountains! Ought not every one to be there?

Mr. Everitt Brookbank is — just five-and-twenty; not much above middle height, but enough so to be remarked on as a fine young man; in possession of arms that have within the last few years pulled in the University Boat at Cambridge, and of lithe and muscular legs, that have won many a pedestrian hurdle-race; known honorably among his companions as a well-looking fellow, a good-hearted fellow, a fellow with "something in him," and a first-rate rider; with curling light hair, and whiskers of the same color—and perhaps too abundant for his not broad face; something of a dandy, but not much, even on the lips of his detractors; not wanting in a sufficiently high estimate of himself, but still not over-confident beyond what is allowable in a good fellow with "something in him" at the early and crude age of twenty-five: such is Mr. Everitt Brookbank.

He is proceeding slowly up the middle of the grand avenue of the fête of St. Annette, drawing himself up to the full measure of his stature; recognizing the fact that nine Frenchmen out of ten do not stand up to the summit of his shoulder; allowing the French to be an amusing people—a jolly people—an ingenious and brave people—without a doubt the

second people of the world; estimating the English, in arts, wealth, liberty, social magnificence, mental and physical dignity, as unquestionably the first nation on the face of the earth; not thinking much about himself, but quite ready to do so; equally ready to think about any one else needing the aid of honest and kindly thoughts: such is the temper of Mr. Everitt Brookbank's mind.

On either side of him are stalls ranged in line under the trees that afford a slight protection from the rays of the sun to the multitudes passing to and fro. It is a variegated assemblage. Stout, middle-aged gentlemen, representing the prosperous Parisian bourgeoisie of the less opulent grades, in costumes adapted to lads bent on killing the hearts of fair ones; dapper servant-maids with natty caps; fierce soldiers of many different services and appointments—the majority with crimson breeches not over fresh in hue; citizens scarcely less martial in aspect, though in private garb; peasant matrons with high caps of the finest lace; girls from the capital, in attire of the extreme fashion, with wicked eyes, and perhaps wicked intentions; workmen in blue blouses, with their children in their arms; bands of juveniles in military trappings, playing soldiers as only French children can; swarms of English sent by the autumn holidays of London to take possession of Paris (deserted by its own proper patrons), among whom are ladies of the evangelical school, "doing at Rome as Rome does," but lamenting over the superstitious frivolity of their Gallic fellow-creatures; priests and sinners of all kinds—form the congregation at which petitions to buy are hurled by venders of china, sweetmeats, ices, lemonade, comical toys, and haberdashery of the trifling sort.

In the distance, the noise and din of half a dozen contending bands, attached to opposition theatres, caravans, and shows, give body and substance to the confused babble of the bazar; and from the town of St. Annette, in the background, comes the vengeful ratan of the barrack drums—

parchment asserting the dignity of the law with a vengeance.

"This is a frightful desecration of the Sabbath, isn't it?" inquires a voice behind Everitt.

Turning round, our friend finds he has been addressed by a countryman of his own, whose words, dress, and appearance make it difficult to assign him his exact position, social and moral. Slight figure, over forty, perhaps over fifty years of age, thin face, sallow and sunburnt, dim, coffee-colored eyes, and large mustaches of black, crossed by one or two white hairs, are the most remarkable natural points in his appearance. His costume consists of a brown Holland suit, white beaver hat, dark cravat, and light gloves.

Twirling his walking-cane round, and turning his dim eyes on Everitt, he quietly repeats his question, with no modulation of voice to indicate either irony or earnestness. "This is a frightful desecration of the Sabbath, isn't it?"

"I haven't arrived at that conclusion yet," responds Everitt, thinking to himself as he speaks, "Um! the man has the bearing of a gentleman, but he appears a queer fish. A man with a deep veneration for the Sabbath doesn't express it by wearing such a suit of sackcloth as he has on. What does he mean by addressing me? Perhaps he wants me to play with him."

"Haven't you?" rejoins the stranger. "That good lady from Tyburnia, with the pink flounces, has, though. 'How grateful such a scene as this ought to make us for our superior advantages!' I heard her say, as she passed me."

"She ought to be reminded that these fanatics have their days of fasting and mortification, when our enlightened countrymen indulge in what mundane pleasures they can command."

"She is right, though. The comparison is in our favor."

"How?"

"Just look about us. Put what we see here by the side

of what we should see at an English fair. Here every husband has his wife with him, and every father brings his babes to take part with him in the holiday. Then we've got no drunkenness here—no coarse love-making in beer-booths—no sergeants slipping the queen's money into the hands of lads stupefied with drink, and so induced to enter the glorious profession of arms, under the free enlistment system. Hollo! what is the disturbance?"

As Everitt turns in the direction of the noise, an inquiring glance, a smile covers his face.

"Ah! exactly so," exclaims the unknown. "There is an establishment where 'Bass' and 'London Stout' are provided to our national wants, and a party of English gentlemen who have been cooling themselves with potations are singing 'God save the Queen.' I must go and join in the chorus."

And away moves the gentleman, and is soon lost to Everitt in the crowd gathering round the noisy islanders.

Proceeding through the quarter in which the caravans are drawn up, Everitt Brookbank finds himself surrounded, if possible, by a more frolicsome company—certainly by more noise. The din of the rival bands is deafening, most satisfactorily so to a people delighting in music. Whose invitation shall we accept? Shall we visit the extraordinary family, consisting of a giant father, a dwarf mother, and a daughter with white hair down to her heels, and pink eyes, who has never required sustenance from the day of her birth? or the grand panorama of the achievements of Napoleon? or the theatre which offers the attractions of a tragedy, a comedy, tight-rope dancing, and an opera? or the grand exhibition of the tableaux vivans of the life of our Savior? The reader must not tremble with disapprobation, for he is only perusing a page of history.

Looking wistfully and with amusement at the poor people crowding up the steps, Everitt follows them into the last-

named place of entertainment. On the platform, to which the steps lead, are three musicians—a sandy-haired ruffian in a flannel shirt and white trowsers beating the drum, a brawny woman clashing a huge pair of cymbals, and a pensive, lean boy making a French horn utter such blasts of misery as no instrument of the kind ever before benefited mankind with. "Just in time! just in time!" the drummer perseveringly roars, very angry with his own throat because it doesn't burst.

"Deux sous" is written up in large characters on a yellow placard. But Everitt finds no one ready to receive his two sous for admission. One pays on retiring, after the performance; and then, in satisfaction with the excellent amusement, one pays gratefully. Such is our polite arrangement.

The crush is past; and seated in the second row from the stage is our adventurer, one of about a hundred and fifty people (of the peasant class, with only a few exceptions), who, densely packed, and impatient of the suffocating atmosphere, are clamoring for the curtain to be drawn up.

Their wishes are complied with. The drum, cymbals, and horn on the platform come to terms of pacification, and the green drop ascends.

Scene 1. Our Savior in his infancy. A pretty little boy, with ruddy cheeks and flaxen curls, sitting on a stool, and habited in a short white muslin frock, with a pink sash.

The curtain drops amid loud applause.

"May I trouble you for a match, for my pipe is out?" asks a common soldier politely of Everitt, who has previously accommodated some smokers from his box of cigar-lights. Mr. Brookbank bows as he complies with the request, and then occupies himself with watching two companions on the bench before him. One is a feeble, sickly little boy, in the dress of poverty, whose thin hand is in the grasp of the other, which other is a withered old woman, who, together with dirt, and bleared eyes, and palsy, shocks humanity.

Out for the enjoyment of the fête that was so delectable when she was a girl is that unfortunate creature, ripe for the pauper's coffin that ought also to contain the grandchild, or great-grandchild, she has with her.

Scene 2. Scene 3. Scene 4. And they all have their quantum of applause.

Then comes the Agony in the Garden, the sandy-haired drummer personating the Son of God.

The spectators are saddened.

The Crucifixion is the next tableau—a rude imitation of the human figure being discovered on the rising of the curtain, nailed to a cross.

"Clap your hands! applaud! applaud!" cries the drummer, sticking his head in from the platform.

No one obeys him. And the curtain once more drops.

"Clap your hands! applaud! applaud!" again vociferates the drummer—this time indignantly.

But he is unheeded, the silence being the most complimentary response made to his encouragements. Everitt sees tears trickling over the grimy cheeks of the palsied old woman, and then he sees her clutch to her bosom the sickly child who is with her.

"Don't be sad," says Everitt, comforting her.

"*He* died for me! *He* died for me!" she sobs in answer, crossing herself devoutly. Nor is hers the only disturbed heart in the rude, untutored assembly; for Everitt, looking behind him, sees many a tearful eye, and then hears many a stifled cry.

Once more the curtain ascends; but this time, the blasphemy (!) being at an end, the object is to create a diversion of feeling. A dirty and repulsive dwarf of middle age, very stout, and dressed in regimentals, runs about the stage, assuring the public that he is no other than the celebrated General Tom Thumb.

"Clap your hands! clap your hands!" screams the drummer.

At length he had no reason to complain of the mournfulness of his house, for the clapping, and laughter, and shouts of satisfaction would have astonished the architects of Babel.

"'Tis better than a page of Voltaire," says a small, sneering voice behind Everitt. "Joy cometh in the morning."

"Oh! it is you, is it?" says Everitt, with a sad smile, as he recognizes his friend of the brown holland costume.

"Have you no symphathy with your kind? Why do not you rejoice with the rest?"

"That old woman keeps my grave face in countenance," Everitt responds. "Her eyes are still wet."

"Poor old fool! You see, she is the only one of the party whose faculties can be said to be on the wane from the effects of age."

"Don't speak so; you pain me, though you give pleasure to yourself."

"Come! come! don't follow the poor body as she hobbles up the ladder to the open air; you must not permit yourself to be enamored of her."

The two ascend the steps, and after having deposited their two sous each in the drummer's hat on the platform, walk down into the fair together.

"She knows what I trust we may when our last time is come," says Everitt, gravely.

"She knows a good deal, I grant you. The great doctrine of the Egyptians is hers, and that is more than the pagan could prove. By Jove! what an age we live in! A hag from the back streets of St. Annette bears away the bell from Plato."

"Because *she believes.*"

"Assuredly—and quite right too—it's all she is fit for. But I must be cautious, or you'll be reproaching me again. Let us, if you have nothing better to do, anticipate the mob, and on the hill there, commanding a view of the fountains

that will be playing in the course of half an hour, smoke a placid cigar, and discuss the merits of something deep and out-of-the-way. I have a case of the most delicate regalias."

There is a certain tempered humor in the manner in which this invitation is given that renders it impossible for Everitt to refuse it; so, nodding assent to his new acquaintance, he turns with him to ascend the hill.

"Here we are, and a tree to shade us. Now for the cigars; now for the lights; and now we are all right."

"Are you staying long in Paris? I suppose not?" inquires Everitt.

"You think I am too fashionable a man to be able to find amusement in it, with the great world away, and English shop-keepers blocking up all the avenues of the Palais Royal. I do not wrong your good opinion, for I am in Paris against my will just now."

"I am concluding a two month's holiday up the Rhine, and into Switzerland, with ten days in Paris, which is, after all, the place for real abandonment to pleasure beyond any other city I am acquainted with. By day and by night, when the blue sky is above its white architecture, and when it is blazing with millions of lights like one great garden of lamps, I like it," says Everitt, enthusiastically; and then, with delightful egotism, attributing his own objects of interest to his friend, he goes on: "The theatres are capital just now. Have you seen the new comedy at the Théâtre du Vaudeville? It is magnificent."

"I hear it is good, and Hutin does his part to perfection; but I have not seen it."

"I advise you, then, not to delay. You have, *of course*, looked in at the New Opera, in the Opéra Comique?"

"No, I have not."

"How strange! I fancied the whole world was rushing to it. But perhaps you have not been long in Paris?"

"Rather more than two months. But how does Marie

look in the piece? The journals are in raptures; but then they always are."

"Divinely. 'Tis impossible for words to tell how sweetly she smiles, and the fresh, timid humor of her manner as she points each new audacity; and then her exquisite voice! I had the honor of being introduced to her only last night by a friend who wrote the little piece now being performed at the Théâtre des Variétés."

This last announcement is made in a tone of modest pride.

A smile on the lips of Everitt's companion is scarcely concealed by his thick mustache as he says, "There are queer stories afloat about that girl. I wonder if they are true?"

"To learn that they are false, you have only to watch her face, which is the silent language of innocence and simplicity," says Everitt, warmly.

"I should enjoy seeing this earthly elysium of yours in a state of insurrection," remarks the unknown, shifting the conversation. "To my melodramatic tastes, another Reign of Terror would be a charming spectacle."

"God grant you may not be gratified!"

"I am afraid I shall not be; though, unless I am widely mistaken, there will be a revolution in the country before two years are over. This citizen-king can not stand."

"And what then?"

"For a limited number of months the people will be perfectly rapturous with their newly-acquired liberty; then they will grow dissatisfied with their poverty, and will proceed to exercise tyranny over each other, and to violate every rule of common sense and humanity."

"And what then?"

"Some man, with the army devoted to him, will shoot them down right and left, and govern the survivors by fear."

"The French are not slaves, to be driven by the lash," says Everitt, warmly. "They are as brave as the English, though less fortunate in most other respects."

"And take our brave English! Suppose a commander-in-chief, with the army devoted to him, were, in such a political crisis as we are proposing for the French, to march his troops up to London, and from Threadneedle Street to Buckingham Palace were to proclaim himself king, with gunpowder not unaccompanied with ball, how many of those brave subjects of Queen Victoria, who go down to the city daily in omnibuses or with umbrellas, would resist?"

"They would fight—even with their umbrellas."

"I should like to see them," is the rejoinder which is followed by a laugh.

Everitt and the stranger continue their conversation for more than an hour, the former uttering his generous crudities with that frankness and energy which are amiable, and not uncommon features in a "young fellow with something in him," and the latter managing to arouse his associate's interest, and, in some slight degree, admiration, by an apparently careless display of much knowledge of books, different nations, and the bad of mankind.

"I must be returning to Paris," says Everitt, after the fountains have ceased to play. "I have engaged to meet a friend at a theatre, and sup with him afterward."

"You told me half an hour since you thought of visiting some places beyond the barriers to-morrow night. Let me prevail on you to change your mind. Come to me instead, and I'll engage to give you such a night of adventure as you never before had in Paris."

"I'll gladly do so. Where shall we meet? and at what time?"

"Can't you come early to my hotel and dine with me—at six o'clock? Two friends will be with me, to whom I shall have great pleasure in introducing you. They will have to leave early, for it is rumored they have engagements at half past eight o'clock at the Opera Comique; but that, of course, is a scandal on the young ladies. You comply? Then let us exchange addresses, to prevent mistakes."

"Lord Brigden!" exclaims Everitt, with astonishment, looking at the card which his lordship has given him.

"The same. I see you have heard of me; no wonder, for my reputation is what the ladies call notorious."

"I know of you as the most daring and brilliant cavalry officer England has."

"And the greatest sinner also."

Everitt corroborates the statement by blushing a little.

"And may I ask you if you are related to the Somersetshire Brookbanks?"

"Sir George is my uncle; and from the recent death of my cousin," answers Everitt, raising a hand to his black hat-band, "I am heir to the baronetcy."

"And to a large estate also, I hope."

"Alas! no. Old Sir George's death will not give me six hundred pounds a year, and my father is not a rich man."

"I know how to pity you. I, Viscount Brigden, of the peerage of Ireland, and all we have just a minute ago stated besides, was born to the like hard fate—rank without adequate wealth; and it ruined me. What is there for a poor nobleman to accomplish, in these sluggish times of peace, that can be designated honorable?"

"Art."

"Pish!"

"He can learn to do good."

"That's the cant on every young man's lips nowadays; but I don't see that their lives illustrate their doctrine. But you may not tarry here, if you are bent on keeping your engagement this evening. Farewell till six o'clock to-morrow evening."

Viscount Brigden had, as he well knew, a bad reputation, and, as he also knew, he deserved it, from which latter piece of information he drew much the same comfort that a rogue does in the consciousness that no one misled him, but that he went wrong of his own accord. Entering the army when he

was a boy of sixteen years and bore the unadorned name of Charles Bellamy, he saw some sharp service before '15, being severely wounded in a dashing cavalry charge made by the English at Waterloo. A few years subsequent to the peace he succeeded to the family honors, quitted the service, and entered, still beardless, into London society, to which he was favorably introduced by the notoriety of a duel, in which he had shot an imperial officer of distinction. With an estate of not more than a thousand a year, he dressed as well as Brummel, and soon became known in what were then called the best circles. But polite drawing-rooms by no means occupied all his care, for he was the boon associate of those sprightly young noblemen who in the days of the Regency fought butchers in Smithfield Market, drove their horses at full swing down the foot-pavements of London's principal streets, and every now and then, out of a pure spirit of philanthropy, gave all the hackney-coachmen in the West End strong drink *ad libitum*, and the privilege of treating their acquaintance. But it was remarked by wary observers that the young Lord Brigden took care that none of the folly he promoted should recoil on himself. At Epsom, Ascot, and in gambling-houses, it was noticed that, however the members of his lordship's set were fleeced, he himself was never a great sufferer. Some were charitable enough to say that his hands were not pure of his brothers' blood, and that the heartless selfishness he displayed in the midst of his follies would have done credit to Shylock. Year by year the unfortunate of those fast young nobles dropped away beggared, or with cruelly curtailed means, to die abroad, or be model country gentlemen residing on their encumbered estates; but Lord Brigden, with poverty, still kept up the game. Then there were some proceedings in Chancery, which brought to light transactions that most certainly his lordship did not intend should form material for public discussion. Whispers that he had virtually committed murder, and had really plundered

an unlucky family of orphans, obtained general credence. Availing himself of a fit opportunity, he essayed a defense of his character in the House of Commons; but honorable members on both sides refused to listen to him, and silenced him with contemptuous laughter and cries of "silence!" He would fain have called out every individual of that honorable assembly, and even debated whether he should not. This *esclandre* had only just ceased to be a novelty, when a divorce suit in high life again displayed Lord Brigden in no favorable light. He went abroad for a while; returned, and hovered about town under a cloud; once more left England, and was not heard of again by the masses till his name was coupled with daring achievements in the Indian wars. Revisiting his native country, he was glorified as a star of the greatest magnitude, and in the numbers of Oriental wretches he was reputed to have cut in two with his own sword, his sins were lost sight of by the world.

Everitt did not fail to present himself at the appointed hour at Lord Brigden's hotel, where, in a very elegant apartment, with windows opening toward the Boulevards, he was soon one of the party he had been in general terms told should be there. A very merry party they were, the fun commencing with Everitt's unmistakable surprise at discovering in one of the ladies his fascinating Marie of the Opera Comique. It was evident to Everitt that his host had not felt bound in honor to withhold from the artless, innocent Marie the praises which had been bestowed on her the day before; but this created no sense of anger in the lady, or embarrassment in her defender. As the repast proceeded, Marie and Eugenie taking nothing but wine and fruit (for had they not ere long to sing the songs of fairies at the Opera?), if Everitt had a cause for dissatisfaction, it arose from his imperfect acquaintance with French not allowing him to catch all the smart sayings of the other three. But on that score he was not much vexed; for Marie repeatedly interpreted into plain and

common words Lord Brigden's *mots*, which, if they were not remarkable for their pure moral tone, were certainly not destitute of polish and wit.

The next day Everitt woke at half an hour past noon; and immediately consciousness and daylight dawned upon him he racked his brains to recall the transactions of the previous evening. He was in his own bed-room; but how he had reached it? by whose assistance? where he had been last, before sinking down on his couch? where first, after quitting Lord Brigden's hotel? Slowly all the particulars of the night of debauchery, all the scenes of brutal infamy, such as, to use the words of one of our best writers, ought to be written in a learned language and be read only by philosophers, all the atrocious deeds he had witnessed, and unspeakably licentious words he had heard, occurred to him. Truly Lord Brigden had fulfilled his promise of giving him such a night in Paris as he had never had before.

"I hate the fellow," said Everitt, as he tried to pay attention to his late breakfast. "There was a cold sneer on his lip all the time—a sneer of triumph at my disgust. He is not a mere visitor of curiosity at such infernal dens, but an *habitué;* every one knew him, and his glib tongue was paying compliments to every one."

Mr. Brookbank was so dissatisfied with himself, and so revolted at his reminiscences, that it was a relief to him to declare his dislike of his host of the previous evening.

"Well," said he, as he strolled out into the sun when he had finished his breakfast, "I won't throw myself again in his way, for I distaste him, nauseate him, abominate him. The day after to-morrow, just before I depart, I will leave my card at his hotel, and that shall close our intercourse."

"Ha! ha! Brookbank! you out thus early?" exclaimed a voice.

Turning round, Everitt saw Lord Brigden standing in the doorway of a jeweler's shop.

"Step in, and wait half a second till I have finished my business;" and, seeing Everitt comply, he turned to the lady who was waiting on him at the counter, and, handing her some notes, said, "Here are three bills for a hundred pounds each, and if you give me three hundred francs we shall be right."

Madame took the notes into a parlor behind the shop for her husband to examine them, and, the scrutiny being satisfactory, soon returned with the change and a formal receipt.

"And now, Madame Andoline, that the jewels are mine, you can have no reasonable objection to giving me all the information you can as to how you came possessed of them."

"If you would call again, my lord—some time during the course of to-morrow, or the next day—I will see what intelligence I am in a position to give you."

Raising his hat and bowing politely, his lordship put his arm in Everitt's and quitted the shop.

"Now, Brookbank, have you no apology to offer me," commenced Lord Brigden, "for leading me step by step into the extravagances of last night? I am your victim; you have my character in your hands, to do what you like with; you can, on your return to London, assert to all the good people of your acquaintance, who are doubtless not a few, that all the charges of immorality and general depravity that have been made against me fall short of the fact. But to leave banter, tell me truly, are you more grateful to me for enlightening your ignorance than disgusted with my apparent profligacy?"

"You certainly are entitled to my acknowledgments for having performed your undertaking to astonish me."

"You are avoiding my question."

"Instead of answering it, I will inquire of you what you think of the moral infirmity of a man who permitted himself, out of morbid curiosity, to be taken from one atrocious sight to another, though at the time he shuddered at what he saw?"

"What a strange fellow you are! Are there many young men like you? or are you, in your circle of intimates, thought an original? Don't think my inquiry impertinent. You are studying me, so it is only fair that I should contemplate you."

Before Everitt could reply, an equipage, pulling up before them as they were crossing the Rue de Rivoli, in the direction of the Champs Elysées, caused them both to look up and see an elegant open carriage, double-seated, and drawn by a magnificent pair of English bay horses, containing two ladies—the one grave, and even melancholy in appearance, and by her dress and hair evidencing that she thought herself old—the other young, graceful, and with all the external attractions of high breeding, though not of a beauty that defied criticism.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," said Lord Brigden, bowing, and showing by his manner he was addressing very intimate friends; "and is our intercourse here destined to be confined to five minutes' chat?"

"Frances and I start this very afternoon for the south, to visit my brother Lacy," replied the elder lady.

"We are now going to leave our cards on some old friends in the Faubourg St. Germain. If you have no especial engagement, accompany us: it will be but for half an hour, but a little time is precious to friendship," said Frances, in a voice that the impetuous Everitt afterward declared to be most musical.

"Allow me to introduce my friend, Mr. Everitt Brookbank, to you, Mrs. Leatheby," said his lordship, taking the invitation of Frances as an intimation that she approved of the aspect of his companion.

"Do you, Mr. Brookbank, set Lord Brigden an example of obedience, and take your seat opposite me. A drive is always an agreeable recreation when—when one has nothing better to do." As Frances spoke this, her large dark eyes laughed an emphasis to the profundity of the observation she

had made, and hospitably she extended her hand, to signify that, were it larger and stronger, and not the tiny thing it was, it should be used to raise her friends into her carriage.

In another minute they were gliding rapidly past the fountains and obelisk in the Place de la Concorde, a soft ripple in the warm air fanning their cheeks.

"Brookbank is enthusiastic in his admiration of Paris," said Lord Brigden.

"So am I," said Frances.

"But your generosity makes you discern good in every thing. Had all people your disposition, the world would not be a bad place even for the worst of us."

"I am earnest," returned Frances.

"You are not a Republican?" put in Everitt, playfully.

"I have not any very definite notion what the word means. But I admire Paris because she has taught the world a truth."

"And what is it?" inquired Lord Brigden.

"That the prize is for the best."

"Ah ha! *Detur digniori!* the old story! And your proof of any man being the best is his being able to clutch hold of the prize?"

"If they would only be Protestants!" sighed Mrs. Leatheby.

"Come, come, mamma, do not forget that we have agreed to think well of the Romanists."

"What do you know of them? Have they been endeavoring to make you a proselyte?"

"No, there is no danger of my lapsing into their errors. But mamma and I have lately formed the acquaintance of some Sisters of Charity, who have made us ashamed of some of our old prejudices, and have compelled us to love them. We were present at the grand service in the Madeleine last night. Were you?"

"No," answered Lord Brigden. "I had thought of go-

ing, but Brookbank persuaded me to accompany him elsewhere."

The drive, though it lasted for more than three quarters of an hour, seemed to Everitt of scarcely ten minutes' duration, so blissfully occupied was he with watching the naive gracefulness of Frances, and listening to such a voice as Mackay says performs the part of "beauty to the blind."

"What a charming creature!" sighed Everitt, as he turned away from the hotel in which Mrs. Leatheby had been staying.

"Too pale; and so cursedly affected," said Lord Brigden, with the amiable intention of irritating Everitt.

"I'll begin to find fault when I have ceased to admire."

"Remember, that one step will take you from admiration to love."

"And why shouldn't I take it?" cried Everitt, enraged at the mockery of his companion, unable to be dignified, and too excited to hold his tongue.

"I see no reason why you should not take it. She has four thousand a year."

"And is not engaged?"

"I believe not. Perhaps she is waiting for a hero. You recollect what she said, 'The prize to the best?' I call that an enticing invitation to the young."

"And you replied, 'The prize to him who can clutch it.' Why don't you make a clutch at the prize, my lord?" Everitt intended to be very bitter.

"Don't taunt me," replied the peer, with a grin. "You know that one so pure, so angelic as Frances Leatheby, can only regard me with pity."

CHAPTER V.

EMILY ALLERTON.

On his return from the Continent, Mr. Everitt Brookbank first touched his native land at Southampton, from which famous town he traversed, by means of a coach and four horses, Dorsetshire, and a corner of Somersetshire, and then, after a short extension of travel, arrived at his father's cottage, which was situated on the outskirts of one of the most picturesque villages in the west of England, not far distant from the good borough of Honiton—celebrated alike for its lace, and freedom from political corruption.

The fortnight he passed with his father, a fine old naval officer, whose boast was that he belonged "to the old school," though the fact was quite the reverse, honestly gave Everitt more pleasure than he had derived from his foreign trip; for Captain Brookbank was a man to be liked by every one, and to be little short of worshiped by a son. But more shall be said of Everitt's father in future pages.

In October Everitt was in town. If he had been asked why, he would have responded without hesitation that he was "up for term," implying thereby that the legal business of the capital would be, or ought to be, at a stand-still without him; though, if veracity in all its sternness must be adhered to, there was no more chance of Everitt's administering justice as Lord Chancellor than there was of his doing so as Jack Ketch. On taking his degree, which ceremony he went through at Cambridge before he had completed his twenty-first year, he enrolled himself among the members of the Inner Temple, and commenced work with meritorious application in a special pleader's chambers. Nor did he suddenly cease

from his exertions, and throw himself on theatres, late suppers, and green-room flirtations, as is customary with those gentlemen of his class who rise to the dignity of being treated of in works of fiction, but he persevered in perusing, copying, and drawing deeds and abstracts, and in studying critically the volumes of our greatest legal writers, till he had proved the soundness of the judgment of those who said that he *might*, if he liked, become a profound lawyer.

In every profession, especially in the various avocations of art and literature, there are numerous candidates for employment who practically manifest high capability, but, either from the absence of the goad of poverty or from want of the stimulus of ambition, fail to put forth all that energy, and determination, and strength which are necessary to winning in a contest.

Everitt, however, is not without a reward for his insufficient toil; for, at this present day, when he is a hard-working man (as true Englishmen all are), he can review his Temple course as complacently as Wordsworth did his unhonored, though not dishonored, University career. Not only did he acquire that knowledge of his country's institutions which the worthy Sir William Blackstone, Knight, deemed so desirable in English gentlemen, but he gained a valuable habit of mind, known by the rather unpopular epithet "practical," that causes him to do, to think, to act, and to speak accurately, deliberately, and concisely. And here it may be observed, it is not much to claim for the often vituperated study and practice of the law to say that they give us, in unbroken series, brilliant and effective workers in literature—men whose imaginative powers and poetic impulses have been toned down, not subdued, by sound worldly wisdom and experience.

By the time of his call, it became evident to Mr. Everitt Brookbank that he should never arrive at distinction in his profession, and that, in all probability, he should not often trouble the courts with his presence. Whatever uncertainty

on the subject lingered in his mind was removed by the death of his uncle's only child, which made a great difference in his prospects, since it insured him the possession, at no distant date, of a rank that society, under ordinary circumstances, respects, and of a property which, though small when balanced against the fortunes of millionaires, was at least equal to what he supposed he should inherit on his father's demise. At least his pecuniary position left him independent, to work or not, as he pleased.

"Gone down to Westminster, sir?" inquired a thin and rather mildewed young gentleman, who discharged the onerous duties of clerk and clothes-brusher to Everitt. The question was put to his master, who was about to quit his chambers overlooking the Temple gardens for a morning walk very shortly after he had come "up for term."

"No, I am not. And you may relinquish that form. If any one calls, say simply that I am not at home."

"Yes, sir."

"It is always wrong to tell lies."

"Yes, sir."

"Are you in want of work?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I don't think I have any thing for you this morning. You've copied out Mr. Maunder's tragedy?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Maunder had it last night, and he gave me a very handsome present."

"Mr. Arthur Strinckall will bring you the rough copy of his novel to transcribe. When that comes, you'll have something useful to do; and till then, you may read that volume of Wordsworth you will see on my table, or the article in the Encyclopædia Britannica on Gunpowder. Never be idle."

"Yes, sir."

Immediately Everitt had closed the door behind him after giving this injunction, the mildewed youth returned to his

normal stool, and gave expression to his devotion to the fine arts by a twofold annotated picture that occupied half one side of a sheet of foolscap. "Never tell lies!!! Well!!! It'll be a long time before this ere gent," was engrossed at the top of the paper; under this fragment was the picture of a gentleman dressed in the extreme of fashion, supposed by the artist to be a portrait of Mr. Everitt Brookbank (tenuity, height, and volume of whisker being caricatured); then followed, in the same characters as in the inscription above, "will come to be that there gent!!!" beneath which was the likeness of one of her majesty's judges, in his chair and robes of office, nodding his head over a paper entitled "The cause of Truth." How many a flower and a village Hampden are left where they ought to be!

Unconscious of his clerk's satire, and not of a nature to be irrecoverably overcome by it, even if it had been imparted to him by some friend, "feeling that he really ought to know it," Everitt walked through a non-rainy and almost non-foggy atmosphere up to the Regent's Park. Before he turned out of Baker Street, to which the finger of scorn has been so often directed, he surveyed his person in a high looking-glass that ornamented the front of a cabinet-maker's warehouse, thereby incurring the unheard ridicule of two miserable spectators, who, being themselves in want of bodily attractions and social advantages, had an elevated contempt for foppery; and then, after ascertaining that his tie was in order, and his face free from the *muscæ Londinenses*, he proceeded two or three hundred yards farther, and paused at a house in one of the most cheerful terraces in the Park.

"Miss Allerton at home?" he inquired of the maid-servant who opened the door; but, before she could reply, a cry of delight was heard from within from a little boy, just five years of age, who rushed forward and jumped into Everitt's arms with a force that apparently implied a wish to go clean through the top button-hole of his waistcoat, as Harlequin is

wont to do through his next-door neighbor's letter-box. It may be stated, also, that this child's cry of delight bore the same relation to the ordinary human voice that a gush of song from a nightingale does to the jabber of an enraged parrot.

"Oh, it's Mr. Everitt Brookbank! You dear man—how glad I am to see you! I have such a lot to tell you about —Mr. Hervey has given me—no, I won't tell you all—only just this—Mr. Hervey has given me a bridle and saddle, and Uncle Hugh gave me a whip, and I've had three rides; but I sha'n't tell you all Mr. Hervey has given me; you shall guess that."

"Here you go, then, over the water," said Everitt, swinging the child in his arms as if he would pitch him over the artificial lake. "Tell me what it is."

"I'll tell you—'tis such a dear little pony, hardly a bit bigger than I am."

"Now, you blue-eyed, curly-pated youngster, lead me up stairs to the drawing-room."

The youngster, upon this request, slipped down to the ground, and, taking Everitt by the hand with a grave air of protection, conducted him into an apartment on the first floor of the house.

"Sit down, my dear, and make yourself comfortable," said this youngster, suddenly rendered sedate and solemn by his cares of host; and as he invited his guest to be seated, he put himself down on a lounge, and crossed his knees with the coolness of years. "Sit down, my dear. I am afraid you'll have to wait a bit, for Emily is engaged now with grandpapa, and won't be able to come to you for some minutes. What would you like to do? Will you read a book? or talk to me?"

The precocity of the infant did not tickle Everitt the less because he was accustomed to it.

"Thank you—I think I should prefer a little chat with you. How's your aunt?"

"Well, she's fairly, poor thing," answered the child, with a mournful shake of his head. "That is, you know, she's as well as can be, under the circumstances, but she is very much worried."

"I am sure you never give her any trouble?"

"Oh dear me, no; I am the greatest comfort she has; she wouldn't know what to do without me. But you see her spirits can't always bear up. She has a great many trials; and, I think, poor grandpapa is more and more vexing to her. You know it isn't grandpapa that says unkind things, but the power within him, that won't let him be what he is. Aunt Emily often tells me so."

As he concluded his eyes became pensive, and his voice sank to a fearful whisper, as if he felt that he was touching on a very solemn subject.

"But how do you know that she is worn and dejected? Does she talk to you about her troubles?"

"No, dear, that's just what she won't do. If she would, I would try to make her laugh and be cheerful; but she always hides all her grief from me, and pretends to be quite happy; but I have found out she isn't. You see I'll tell you something, only it must be a secret," continued the child, in his distinct, musical under-tones. "Sometimes I am awake before she is, and then, till just lately, I used to get out of my crib and go and call her. Well, once I caught her asleep, and I saw the dear girl had been crying, and when I told her, she did not exactly say no, only she laughed it off, and said my head was filled with such queer fancies; and now she won't let me ever see her until she has been called, and nurse always keeps me tight in the nursery till it is breakfast-time."

These confidences were on the point of being pursued farther, when the door opened, and there entered Emily Allerton—too decided and thoughtful in her air to be called a girl—too young and girlish to be called a woman—elegant,

and slight in figure, of a clear, delicate complexion, and with sunny light brown hair falling in long ringlets down the sides of a face endowed with that peculiar beauty which is given only to the good.

"I am very glad to see you again; it is such a long time since we have had you with us," was her greeting.

"Not so *very* long; for I spent the morning here the day before I went abroad."

"And that was three months since. I keep an accurate calendar. Are you aware what this day is celebrated for?"

"I passed sentence on it as a very ordinary day as I came from the Temple."

"'Tis Hugh's birth-day."

"And yours also, then."

Emily nodded.

"She's twenty-four to-day," put in Master Arthur; "she's getting quite old; but she doesn't look old—does she, Mr. Brookbank?"

"I can never bear anniversaries in mind. I suppose, when I come to be engaged, it will be considered a breach of lover's propriety not to be aware when the lady's birth-day comes."

"It will be no very cruel tax on your memory and attention, when that time arrives. This day is celebrated for one event more."

"Ah! I can tell you what that is. 'Tis this day eight years that Hugh brought me down to your cottage at Fulham, since which time we have been on the most intimate terms, and positively, during the entire time, have not had one single quarrel—a sure sign we don't care much for each other."

"A three months' separation every now and then prevents such a catastrophe," Emily rejoined, smiling archly; and then she added, "You see how well Hugh's comedy is spoken of. Have you congratulated him?"

"He spent last night with me, when we talked that and many other things over. He is not satisfied with it—nor—nor—"

Everitt hesitated, and glanced at little Arthur, who trotted out of the room, saying, "There, you shall have your chat, my dears. Only mind, Emily love, that you don't keep grandpapa waiting for lunch."

"Nor is he satisfied with himself," Everitt concluded his sentence with saying.

"No, he is not. Poor fellow! he is very much to be pitied, and, in some respects, to be admired," Emily answered, sadly. "His indiscretions and his follies are cruel punishments to him, for the discomfort they cause him in his worldly circumstances is not less than the remorse he suffers when reflecting upon them."

"He has made resolves to be more prudent, and to work more diligently."

"Work more! he toils like a slave as it is! If he would only be less industrious, and go less into society! He acknowledges his weakness in giving up his time and talents to amusing others instead of doing them substantial good."

"I can not marvel at his conduct. He is so petted and caressed that it gives one distinction to be addressed familiarly by him in public."

At this juncture a man-servant, in plain black, entered to announce that luncheon was ready in his master's room.

"You will join us?" inquired Emily, entreatingly.

"Of course; it is one thing I had in view when I left home this morning."

"Thank you; I knew such was the case. Come now. You will find him slightly changed—more weak in body, less clear in intelligence, and more nervous. During the last three months he has seen scarcely any visitors; and when he has been for a few days without the excitement of callers, he is much worse."

As she gave this intelligence, she conducted Everitt to her father's apartment.

On entering it, the guest saw, not for the first time, an elegantly and richly appointed room, ornamented with a profusion of works of art, Sevres portraits, buhl, prints, paintings—all worthy of attention, and some very costly. Seated on a lounge, with a spring pillow behind him, was an aged and suffering man. A nervous twitch distorted his thin features every few seconds, and the lines running from his mouth showed that bodily disquiet had for long been his daily companion. But his costume was quite the reverse of that in which an invalid usually indulges, for it consisted of a well-made frock-coat, of a snuff color, with a collar of a hue somewhat darker, buttoned at the waist, but allowing a portion of a Cashmere waistcoat to appear, a faultless white cravat, and tight boots polished to the extreme point of resplendency. So arrayed, with his chin neatly shorn, his whiskers trimmed, his eyebrows pointed, and with a youthful flock of hair curling on his head, sat Mr. Allerton.

As Everitt approached, Mr. Allerton rose and made a dignified and graceful bow, and, sinking back on his seat, gave hospitable welcome. "Glad to see you, Alvanley, very glad to see you. This confounded ague keeps me at home. Chicken broth, a glass of Madeira, and a game of ecarte with my ward, Miss Emily, are my only resources from ennui. Any thing going on at White's or Brookes's?"

"Just nothing," answered Everitt, shrugging his shoulders. "M'Mahon was inquiring after you; and, by-the-by, he won a thousand from Hertford last night at whist. But 'twas dull; every one out of spirits, and wanting you."

"Ah ha! the rogues can't get on without me. Why don't they content themselves with the other George? Eh! why not?"

"There's a difference, Brummel, between *George the First* and a man who will never be more than *George the Fourth.*"

"Very good, very good!" exclaimed the beau, chuckling with glee at the compliment. "'Tis almost as good as what her Grace of Devonshire said yesterday, when she brought me those flowers. 'My dear George,' she assured me, 'he'll never be monarch while you are alive.' You'll lunch with us?"

The invitation was accepted, and the party forthwith took their seats at the table that was spread at the back of the large room. The transit from his lounge to his easy-chair at the board was attended with difficulty to Mr. Allerton; for, though he could rise from a sitting posture and make a bow, he could not walk a single step without assistance. Placing her right arm around his waist, and giving his arms the firm support of her left hand, Emily helped her father across the apartment, smiling gently up into his face as she did so. Turning down on her a frown of displeasure, even of hate, the old man submitted to the charity with a bad grace; and, as he sank down between two cushions before his plate, muttered, "Cursed officious, upon my word! extremely insolent! making me a cripple before my time;' and turning to Everitt, who had taken a place on his right, he continued in explanation, "You see, I can't resent these liberties; she is my ward—a poor orphan left to my care. But, now that I am about to marry, some step must be taken to teach her her position."

Everitt bowed and said "Exactly so."

"This marriage can't be driven off any longer. Wash-tub's daughter must patch up the rent—and no little one it is. Fifteen thousand at Ascot, and thirty more during the season at play, can not be called a trifle. So little Kate Kimber and her hundred thousand will, after all, win me. Lucky woman!"

Everitt turned his eyes from Emily, but he could feel her shudder at this mention of her mother's name.

"So, when this ague is off, Cupid will be on. By-the-by," Mr. Allerton went on, after a pause, "I want to ask you—"

He stopped with a bewildered stare.

"The books!" whispered Emily to Everitt, who was not slow to take the hint.

"Now it strikes me, George," he said, "have you seen some absurd books that every one is laughing about, actually advancing, not only that old George the Third is gone, but also that Big Ben—"

"Falsehoods! Lies! lies!" cried the old man, furiously.

"Absurd fabrications! ridiculous nonsense!"

"Are they, indeed?" the beau exclaimed several times, earnestly; and then, with tears of gratitude in his eyes for the precious intelligence, he proceeded to put other questions. "Then he isn't dead? and he didn't say 'this is death?' and his body did not perish by slow, slow degrees, racking him with the pains of hell?"

"No sane person believes it?"

"And I'm not dead? I did not sink, step by step, into all the coarseness of vulgar penury, and all the ignominy of meanness? I did not subsist for years by soliciting alms from my former friends? I wasn't thrown into prison at Caen with the scum and filth of human degradation? And then, my mind wasting away, and my poor paralytic body growing more and more feeble, I didn't become the laughing-stock of children, and the pity of compassionate servants? I didn't lie on straw in a filthy garret, domineered over by *a woman—a woman?*" (Here he glanced tremblingly at Emily.) "She who once loved me, though her rank was high, and her wealth and beauty great, didn't cross the water to gaze at and weep over me, as I tottered on, a broken, childish old man, unconscious whose eyes were upon me? My friend, the only man I ever cared for, didn't come over from England to assist me when I was a moping idiot, and didn't know him? And I didn't perish in the Bon Sauveur, with none to tend me but the charitable sisters?"

After a few seconds he became calm, and, with the tears

still falling from his eyes, commenced devouring, with a greedy appetite, the dish that was placed before him.

When the luncheon was removed, Mr. Allerton's servant placed before his master a tray of snuff-boxes, interspersed with a few pieces of jewelry, which cabinet of art the old man invited his guest to examine with him.

"This is exquisite, isn't it? Bedford gave it me a month ago in a very graceful way—yes, I must say it was neatly done—though any thing like elegance from Bedford! well, well! I was on the point of leaving Almack's with Coventry, when I found my snuff-box gone. 'Bedford, my dear scoundrel, have you stolen my box?' I said to the duke, who came up to us. 'How can you suspect me?' was the answer. 'Because you're my friend.' 'Then allow me, George, to act the part of one at a pinch,' he rejoined, slipping this charming morceau into my hand. The next morning I sent him my portrait in miniature set in brilliants."

These fashionable confidences were continued till the day was closing into dusk; and then, when Everitt took his leave, on the plea that he had to call on Lady Jersey, he was permitted to depart only on the understanding that he would come the next morning for half an hour before going down to Watier's.

"Thank you very much. How I tax your kindness in asking you to lighten my toil!" Emily said to Everitt, when he presented himself in her drawing-room to say good-by. "But it is not to spare myself, you know, that I like you to come. The monotony of life without visitors, now that he can not leave his own rooms, is very wearying to him, and makes him very uneasy; but now, thanks to you, he will be happy for the rest of the day."

"I wish you could get more change and recreation. This continued labor is too much for you."

"Don't pity me; I am quite well," she replied, with a smile.

"I can not help pitying you. If you would only complain of your fate and be discontented, I should not grieve so in thinking about it. I am compelled to compare my easy, careless existence with your unceasing anxiety."

"Your life won't always be an easy one, I trust."

"You don't wish it sad?"

"No, but useful to others; and that it can not be if it is an idle one."

"Ay; but then, if I exert myself, I shall find my reward in the praise of men. But you—no one knows your self-denial and heroism."

"So it ought to be. I have heard a good man say that, to learn the character of a man, you must ask the question, 'What has he done in the world?' but if you would know a woman's merit, you must inquire, 'What, and how, has she suffered at home?' It is no stern lot; the world pays *you*, but God rewards *us*."

"And does so with the stinginess of a great capitalist."

"Hush! hush! To flatter your wit you have stabbed your conscience."

She continued after a pause, "And if you will not allow us women to be contented without having the assurance that we are of importance beyond the doors of our own houses, be comforted with knowing that we have that consolation also. Wherever the voices of great and good men are heard, they attribute much of what is excellent in society—reverence for things holy, forbearance from selfish enjoyment, singleness of purpose—to the influence of good women exercised on those within the range of their domestic affections."

"God bless you, Emily! whenever I come to be a great man, I shall say in like manner," Everitt replied earnestly, and then took his departure.

As he directed his steps toward Pall Mall with the intention of dining in his club, many solemn and gentle thoughts —solemn, for they were in part of himself, and that want of

purpose of which he deemed his life the victim, and gentle, for they reverted to Emily, her bitter task, her uncomplaining fortitude, and calm reliance on other than human aid—made him tread slowly, and with a softened spirit, through the crowds that hurried past him. And yet, such is the caprice and such the willfulness of those powers we call the affections, if the vision of Frances Leatheby, whom he had seen but once, and of whom he positively knew nothing, had risen before him at that very moment, his heart would have bounded with joy; and if he had been told to make his choice between happiness with Emily and misery with Frances, the large dark eyes and coquetting face that he had gazed on for less than one short hour in Paris would have won in the decision.

As for Emily, when Everitt left her to visit his club and to go to a theatre in the evening, her day's labor had not reached its termination. To attend on the father who did not know her as his child, but with the tyranny of a disordered mind exacted the most harassing service from her, to gossip with him, to make him his tea, and after it, for three long hours, to play backgammon with him, taking, however, good care not to win a game from him—these were among the most trifling of the duties she had to discharge ere her patient retired under the care of his man to rest, and she was at liberty to enjoy the composure of solitude, and to anticipate another day of effort and endurance, and one, too, not as this had been, broken by a cheerful interview with a friend.

"Emily, dear," said little Arthur, soon after greeting her the next morning, "I wish Mr. Brookbank would come again to-day, for he does you good. I was thinking about him last night."

"Well, Arthur, and what about him?"

"I should like him and you to marry; for he seems very fond of you, and I'm sure you love him."

As he finished his observations, the acute young gentleman raised his eyes to aunt Emily, to extract from her countenance that assent to his opinions which he felt they deserved.

"Why, dear Emily, I haven't hurt you, have I? What is the matter?" he exclaimed, in another second, and, running to his aunt, threw his arms round her neck.

"You did not mean to pain me, darling," she answered, softly. And, recovering herself quickly, she added, "If you make me a promise, Arthur, I know I may trust you to keep it. Will you make one?"

"Of course."

"Never say any such thing as you have just said to Mr. Brookbank; and never say any such thing again to me or any one else. Will you promise to obey me?"

"Certainly, dear," said Arthur, looking surprised.

CHAPTER VI.

COUSIN HUGH.

"My dear, that boy does you credit," said the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough to his wife, uttering the words boldly and unhesitatingly. His manner asserted more plainly than speech, "I have only spoken seven words, my dear—no more; but they contain a great deal!"

Mrs. Dillingborough blushed at the commendation as she asked, "But why does he do *me* credit?"

"He is your son, and you may be proud of him with reason. To be able to say 'I am a mother' is a rational ground of exultation for any devout or patriotic woman. The early fathers held very erroneous notions of the dignity and beauty of wedded love; they looked on marriage at the best as an inferior estate to celibacy; and some regarded mothers as necessary machines, and babies as necessary absurdities.

The view that detestable and impious charlatan, Napoleon, took of the noblest career a woman could accomplish was not far from truth. 'Increase and multiply' was the divine command at the creation, and brutes, under the unerring guidance of instinct, obey; but man, with his vain philosophies, in one age inculcated by Origen, in another by Malthus, questions the propriety of the injunction. You, Isabel, have not been contumacious, and as a reward, you are the mother of as fine a lad as the Dillingboroughs have ever had. His father in the sixteenth degree was a baron, and perhaps in time he—"

"Will be a good man," Isabel put in with a smile.

This conversation took place one evening at seven o'clock, or slightly past, in the library of Mr. Dillingborough's Rectory house in London, before a roasting fire, and over, or, to be accurate, along one side of, a table garnished with fruit and wine. Soon after her marriage, Isabel discovered that her husband had a lively regard for certain of the comforts and habits of his widowed existence, among which ranked high in the list moderate indulgence in port wine and walnuts, while sitting after dinner in the easy-chairs of his various libraries. The young wife therefore insisted and wheedled her reluctant master into resuming that and sundry other innocuous pleasures, and allowing her to sit with him during his period of post-prandial epicureanism. To do Mr. Dillingborough justice, he offered an honorable amount of opposition to these proposals; but there was no resisting Isabel's importunities, so orders were given that, "when they were alone," dessert was to be placed for them, during the winter months, in the library.

Mr. Dillingborough paused after his brief burst of discourse, and drank a glass of wine that shone in the beams of the fire like that famous crimson light behind which the varlet "pestles his poisoned poison."

"Five next birth-day."

"Five next birth-day," echoed Isabel.

"He will be a great trouble to you."

"Not much, I trust."

"You must anticipate anxiety."

"I had rather not."

Mr. Dillingborough shook his head, took a few more sips, and then again broke the silence. "Five more years! why, Isabel, we are getting quite an old couple! at least I am!"

"Not a couple—you don't mean that?" Isabel interposed.

"No, you goose; how should I grow into a couple? How can one ever become two?"

"By being multiplied by two, clearly."

The rector burst out into hearty laughter at Isabel's drollery, who, in beholding the consequence of her humor, had the satisfaction of seeing that the only purpose she had in speaking was accomplished.

"You're getting on very fast. Your intelligence is ripening, and your wit daily becomes more vigorous," observed the old man, when he next spoke. "You couldn't have talked so when you used to visit the green-house at Copley and walk back home to Kilverton. You are coming on—or I am going off."

Another pause; some more wine; and one prune, which Isabel put on his plate.

"Still you'll have an anxious time with him, and perhaps no friend will be near of whom you can ask advice."

"What do you mean?" cried Isabel, opening her eyes with alarm.

"Why, my love, you can not reasonably hope that I shall be alive when he is at college."

"Pray—pray don't speak in that way," implored Isabel. "Why do you suggest such horrible thoughts?"

"We ought to look forward, and not forget to glance at the dark side," responded the rector, gravely.

"God will help me!" whispered Isabel.

"I trust so, my dear—I trust so, but you may not be unreasonable in your expectations."

"Of course not."

"You may not construe every occurrence in the most unfavorable manner."

"It would be wicked and ungrateful in the extreme to do so," said Isabel, folding her hands piously.

"And, above all things, you must allowance him liberally, and not be too strict with him."

"What do you mean?" again cried Isabel.

"I was speaking of the boy, my dear," answered the rector, hazily.

"And I was thinking of—" But Isabel did not complete her sentence.

More silence; more wine; and another prune.

"What do you think of the laws of primogeniture?" the rector asked, after a considerable period of meditation.

"I am not a lawyer," Isabel responded, evading the question.

"No, I never accused you of that," replied the rector, testily; "but you can tell me how you think a father ought to distribute his property among his children."

"Yes; and I should say he ought, in such a distribution, to do as his conscience directs him."

"Don't tease me. You trifle with me."

There were signs of no ordinary irritability in the rector's face as he spoke; but they vanished almost instantly when Isabel crossed over the hearth-rug to him, and, putting an arm over his shoulder and a kiss on his lips, said, in soft, low tones, but with an earnestness of supplication that would have beseemed a prayer to Heaven, "I implore you, my dear husband, not to ask my advice on such a subject. Decide yourself, and do not honor—do not burden me with the necessity of giving you counsel. You know in what direction my affections lead my judgment, and you know also that my

fear is that your knowledge of those affections, and sympathy with them, should cause you to act unjustly, in the opinion of the world, to your other children."

"Well, well, it shall be as you wish," was the answer; "but as you won't chat, I must take my nap. Let me see, the carriage will be at the door at half past ten."

"Here's your night-cap," said Isabel, taking a white silk handkerchief from a drawer in the table, and throwing it lightly over his head. "Go to sleep, and I'll sit and watch you as soon as I have darkened the lamp."

After almost extinguishing the light, she slipped into a seat in a corner removed from the fire and sat noiselessly watching the shadows and dim illuminations caused by the flickering flames in the grate play on the shelves of learned books and the antique portraits that covered the walls; listening to the easy and heavy breathing of the sleeper, the falling of cinders, the sinking together of the ashes, and wandering among a thousand thousand thoughts that sprung from and ever led her back to her husband's speech, "We are getting old—at least I am." As she reviewed those past five years, did she notice changes to be lamented in herself and others? Most certainly alterations had taken place, of which she was not ignorant. Worldly grandeur, and more especially the magnificence of so small an item in it as the Honorable and Reverend Harrie Dillingborough, appeared to her very differently to what it did when she was child Isabel at Kilverton. Was it in sorrow that she saw that the great world was like a great mountain, more enchanting in the distance than when near? Was she mortified in learning that the mighty family to which she was united, and which she had regarded with loyal awe, was scarcely of average stature among those giants with whom they felt they held equal rank?

That father, whom she had once venerated as brave and good, did it ever come into her mind that he was a scheming, worldly little man, who, in uniting her to the old rector, had

considered only his own social advancement? and if this, in ever so vague a form, occurred to her, was it followed by a cold weight dropping on the heart? The Reverend Harrie Dillingborough was, to her childish inexperience, the impersonation of human talent and devout piety; had she come to regard him as a *good-natured old man*, prolix in his speech, procrastinating and timid in action, hazy in his intellects, which were ever puzzling about in the tangle of prejudices and perplexities that enveloped him; not passionately devoted to things sacred, meaning well to man, but better to himself; loving her much, but a rise in the funds more?

Did she see that he was, in truth, no mate for her? that he was incapable of being one with her, as the composure of evening can not unite with the freshness of morning? that her aspirations would be deemed, if she unfolded them to him, the workings—not wonderful, not blameworthy, not unlovable—but the uneasy workings of a mind unsubdued by time?

The cinders are dropping, the ashes are sinking, the flames have ceased, and the red glow alone lights up the room; and there, in his easy-chair, with his head lying back, and covered with the white kerchief, reposes the rector. Hush! hush! Quietly on tiptoe steals away Isabel, opens the door without noise, closes it without disturbance, crosses the hall, mounts the stairs, and enters her child's nursery, which, like the library down stairs, is dim in firelight. The child is sound asleep—sound asleep as his father—and Isabel, seated near the bed, watches him too. "You'll have an anxious time with him—you'll have an anxious time with him," said Mr. Dillingborough.

How long Isabel remained by her child's bed, and how long she devoted to the task of self-adornment, it is beyond the power of the historian of these pages to declare; all he can state is, that, punctual to the appointed minute, she stood before her husband, ready to proceed to Mrs. Dalmaine's house, which that evening was thrown open to receive that

noble society in which Mrs. Dalmaine was born, and those highly interesting authors, artists, musicians, and political vagabonds who were wont to rally round her twice or thrice during the season. Young, or at least not approaching *passée*, beautiful, endowed with an easy-tempered husband possessed of twenty thousand per annum, and gifted with no common talents and amiable qualities, Mrs. Dalmaine had a somewhat paradoxical reputation as a leader of fashion, a wonderfully good-natured woman, and a genius.

As has been before remarked, the dignified circle in which the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough moved was, for the most part, a decorous, cold, and even stupid circle; consisting of a few high-and-dry bishops (who had obtained their advancement long before intellectual qualifications were deemed requisite in a prelate, so long as his father had a vote in the Upper House, and half a dozen in the Lower), a few ancient members of the peerage, gray-headed patricians whose school of Toryism was almost extinct, and family connections in the shape of dowager aunts and old-maid cousins.

When Isabel first presided at her table in town, and went the round of a series of dinner-parties, as dull and formal as ever were the entertainments of the genteelest country gentility, she was astonished at witnessing how prosy and humdrum grand people can be. Every now and then, however, in the course of the months annually passed in Westminster, her visiting engagements took her out of this high-and-dry set, and gave her a glimpse of a more elegant, and amusing, and brilliant life in London; and nowhere did she get more agreeable change of this kind than at the parties of Mrs. Dalmaine.

In due time she found herself slowly passing through the drawing-rooms in Park Lane, which blazed with light pouring down from enormous chandeliers on lustres and mirrors arranged with admirable ingenuity for causing the rooms to have the effect of being twice the size they really were, and for giving every visitor a flattering likeness of himself in a

score of different directions. And sweetly charming was Isabel allowed to be as she proceeded, leaning on her husband's arm, through the crowds of ladies, as a general rule rich in jewels in proportion as they began to be poor in charms, young girls already fagged by the season which had scarcely begun, begums and gentle matrons, stolid guardsmen, supercilious club roués, mustached Italians, and bearded Germans.

"Put me down in a seat in this corner," said Isabel, when she had passed through the rooms twice, exchanging words and recognitions with the few acquaintances she found in them, "and while I am amusing myself with staring at all these queer faces, do you go to Dean Nollekens, and hear his version of his proceedings. You will not find me, on your return, gone off to waltz with any gay cavalier."

The Reverend Harrie Dillingborough did not object to a proposal which offered him the prospect of an hour's prosification with his friend about a Cathedral squabble; so, consigning Isabel to a chair in the corner, he went off in search of the dean. To that corner many an eye turned to survey and approve Mrs. Dillingborough, whose excitement and pleasure at the scene gave fresh animation to her beauty.

"Dressed in such exquisitely good taste," whispered one lady to a friend, in reference to Isabel's white tulle and rose-colored knots, the white and crimson camelias in her breast, and her dark hair falling in long ringlets in front, and behind braided with a chain of pearls.

"With such kissable lips," commented a second lady, blessed with lips that unquestionably might claim the epithet as their own.

"What intellect and thought in her eye! and how graceful!" observed a third.

"And the father of that exceeding small, glorious maid, how magnificent and venerable was he!" said a heart-stricken exile, who professed devotion to England's daughters,

though he had not entirely mastered the difficulties of their language.

But the gazers were quickly attracted in another direction, for, at the request of Mrs. Dalmaine and some ladies who were near him, a gentleman, famous through the town as a wit and author, seated himself at a piano and sang a comic ballad of his own composition, entitled "Our last Parliament." Each stanza closed with a general laugh from the whole room, that showed the points were not lost upon the auditors. As the song proceeded, the crowd closed round the performer, parties flocked in from the other rooms, and those urgently demanded favorites of fashion with half a dozen engagements that very night on their hands, who were about to return down the staircase immediately after having climbed up it, stopped, and assisted in the riotous applause. So triumphant was the essay, that the satisfaction of the hearers, on the conclusion of the last verse, was expressed with a vehemence little becoming so well-bred an assemblage.

"No, indeed, I can not sing again," replied the vocalist, a tall, slight, but athletic young man, with a small, round face, that was pallid and smooth as a child's, and rendered expressive by laughing black eyes. "You have had my one solitary chanson; I have none other for this season. You think one is a very small stock in trade; it is quite enough, for, of course, in this highly civilized land, no one pays a visit more often than once a year to the same friend; indeed, I have thought of being economical, and making 'Our last Parliament' serve me for two sessions."

"I wish you would treat us later in the evening, when you have seen who are here, and inspected them, with a display of your talent as an improvisatore," importuned the lady to whom he spoke.

"My dear Lady Marie, I am no improvisatore; the wretched fellows who told you so only desired to degrade me in your eyes into a mountebank."

Another lady, resembling a hollyhock in being tall and sometimes stately—in being indefatigable in her attempts to beautify nature, but not succeeding—in being conspicuous, but not winning—drew near, and gave her subscription to the adulation. "How much we are obliged to you! the music and the song alike good!"

"Nay, nay, I have no command over the keys, and what remains of my poor voice is not more pleasing than such remains usually are."

"But," persisted the amiable woman, "the rhymes are so full of fun."

"That was extracted from Punch," rejoined the vocalist, with a mischievous laugh.

"If so, you placed it there originally."

"Mrs. Stratford, can you, do you, believe that I—I—write in newspapers? Who ever insinuated such a thing to you?" was the answer, made with an indescribably droll affectation of horror at such an imputation.

As with ease and humor he put aside his flatterers, and extricated himself from their persecution, Isabel rose with a face of delight and surprise, and advanced to welcome him as he approached her quarter.

"Will you be so ungracious as to reject my thanks?" she said, as she placed both her hands in his.

"What, Isabel, is it you?" he replied, with astonishment. "I beg your pardon—I mean Mrs. Dillingborough."

"You must do penance for your breach of decorum, and by my side here have a long chat with cousin Isabel about old times. How strange that, so often and so much as I have heard of you in London, we have never met before! Why did you not call on me after my wedding?"

Hugh Falcon—for it was Isabel's cousin Hugh, whom Captain Potter, of Kilverton, had years before denounced as reprobate and unworthy—was not slow to respond cordially to this address, though a London rout is not the best con-

ceivable spot for two old friends to indulge in family reminiscences in.

"Have you seen my uncle Potter lately?"

"Not for nine months," answered Isabel; "we do not pass much time together; he is fully occupied with his family and his farm."

"And you also—how is the little boy? Does he grow more like you than ever?"

"How did you know he resembled me?"

"My veracious eyes were my informants. I have before now waylaid your nurse in St. James's Park, and had an interview with my little kinsman. He knows me well enough. Did he never tell you of the funny Mr. Ivan Ivanowitz?"

"Are you Mr. Ivan Ivanowitz?" answered Isabel, with a start."

"The same; although little Harrie supposes me to be engaged in the cold north, capturing a forlorn bear."

"And yet—you have never been near me?"

Hugh turned his flashing dark eyes full on Isabel, who underwent a novel thrill of wonder, and perhaps fear, till their earnest, searching scrutiny had concluded. "I kept away from you because—"

"Good evening," put in a soft voice from a dazzlingly superb belle to Isabel. "Have you exchanged words with the Armenian prince? You must have him presented to you, for he is such an interesting creature. Is he not, Mr. Falcon?"

"A handsome fellow, unquestionably, and with an agreeable fund of conversation," answered Hugh.

"I see dear old Mr. Dillingborough is here. How can you let him keep such late hours? They'll kill him," continued the belle.

"I trust not," answered Isabel, coldly.

"Do you sing again, Mr. Falcon? I wish you would, to oblige me."

Hugh said he had neither voice nor spirits for another song; and then the fair intruder ordered the cavalier on whose arm she leaned to conduct her to the fostering wing of her mamma, or—yes, she would give him a choice—to lead her to the waltz.

"Then you number Miss Leatheby among your friends?" inquired Hugh of Isabel when Frances had left them.

"She is my detestation," answered Isabel, emphatically.

Hugh laughed at the heartiness with which the dislike in which he was a participator was declared, and afterward observed, "But she is very much admired."

"Her beauty deserves praise."

"And her wealth also."

"It will enable her to select a tyrant from a herd of slaves."

"Ah! Hugh," exclaimed Everitt Brookbank, putting a hand on his friend's shoulder, "I want to see you. Is she here?"

"Yes; and has honored me with a word."

"How does she look?"

"Divinely; that's the word, I believe."

"Where shall I find her?"

"Waltzing with Lord Brigden."

"That infernal man! If she did but know him!" said Everitt, biting his lip and turning pale.

"Don't be alarmed. She'll dance with you, if you ask her."

"Come and see me, old boy. You have not been near me for weeks; I am very wretched, and I want your advice," returned Everitt, piteously. And on he went in pursuit of his goddess.

"A distinguished-looking young man! who is he?" asked Isabel.

"One of the servile gang you mentioned. He would willingly barter his many chances of a long and prosperous life

to be allowed to call Frances Leatheby his own for one short month."

"Save him from such a fate: he deserves a better one—does he not?"

"He is a good fellow, really a noble nature; no lot would be too fortunate for his deserts."

"Then, could you bear to see him the husband of such a selfish, heartless woman?"

"How do you know she merits all this severity of condemnation?"

"I feel it," answered Isabel, with a shudder. "Her eyes, which people tell me inflame so many hearts, make me shiver."

"Falcon, my dear fellar—just one word," said Leonard Ambleby, a languishing Adonis with perfumed whiskers.

"What does the world say to you, Leonard?" Hugh asked, good-naturedly.

"You see, my dear boy," responded Leonard, dropping his voice to a whisper, "those De Vere girls are here, and, by Cupid, I'll ask 'em to dance, and make an offer to 'em to-night. I'm game. Hicksley assures me that forty thousand pounds apiece is the least they have, and I am resolved to cut in."

"And marry both?"

"Don't joke, Hugh; for, really, matrimony is no more a fit subject for laughter than death. What I want you to do is to settle which of 'em it is to be. How do you say—Julia? or Kate?'

"Which are you in love with?"

"Ah! now that's it. I am in love with both—that is, I am just as devoted to one as I am to the other—so I can't decide."

"Toss up, then," said Hugh, gravely. "Heads, Julia; tails, Kate."

"It would look deuced queer to be spinning a coin up to the ceiling in this place: that won't do. Help me out of the hobble somehow or other."

"On the table at the side of this room you'll find a pack of cards Alfiori, the conjuror, was using an hour since. Draw two cards—the first for Julia, the second for Kate—and let the highest win. Lucky girl Julia will be, if she gets the prize!"

Leonard obeyed, and in half a minute returned to whisper in Hugh's ear, "Julia has got it," and immediately started off for action.

"That 'sickly Apollo,' as you call him," said Hugh, in answer to an observation from Isabel, "has been imparting to me the secrets of his heart. He has gone off to hear his fate from the lips of a girl to whom he is passionately attached."

Isabel laughed. "How extraordinary of him to make such confidences to you! Does not the knowledge that you write books, and 'print the notes you take,' make people cautious what they say to you?"

"Quite the reverse. Wherever there is an eccentric old maid with an unfortunate penchant for a young man of rank and fortune, an old man who has received ten refusals from the same quarter, a foolish woman who is paying the just penalty of her follies in the ridicule of her neighbors —in short, wherever there is a person to whom is attached a story, a mishap, a quarrel, an absurdity that ought to be buried in silence, that person is impelled by an irresistible power to unfold to me or some other author all the windings of the circumstances."

Before Isabel could reply, the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough approached.

"Oh, here is Mr. Dillingborough. This, dear, is the cousin Hugh Falcon you have heard me so often speak of, and also Harrie's especial friend Ivan Ivanowitz, as it appears (which it certainly does not from Harrie's pronunciation) his name is."

The rector was delighted to see Hugh. "Do come do

and call on us, Mr. Falcon. No delays. No ceremony. And we'll not demand an apology from you for keeping away so long. You must consider yourself complimented by my good regards (which, I can assure you, you have), for I don't like authors—scandalous, leveling fellows!—but *you* have done good service in the Conservative cause. You recollect, perhaps, how I gave the Rads a cudgeling in the Conservator. My *candid statement* caused a good deal of sensation; but that was years before your time."

"But the fame of it has come down to me, and I have also read it. Your sublime commiseration for the one soul was gall to the rascals."

The Reverend Harrie Dillingborough was delighted. Society always enlivened him with a buoyancy and geniality of temper that quickly expressed themselves in his discourse and manner. The difference between the rector from breakfast till the evening, and the rector at a dinner or ball, was so great, that his friends commiserated him in the morning as a worn-out, somnolent old gentleman, and when they saw him by candlelight pronounced him a marvelously good companion—for his years.

"Can't you manage to call on me to-morrow? I shall be at home after four. Do come, for a long talk."

To this invitation, which came from Isabel, Hugh was giving an answer of acceptance, when the rector poured upon him further assurances of the pleasure he had in making his acquaintance. "But we may not stay longer, Bel, for 'tis already very late. So let us slip away. Good evening, Mr. Falcon; we shall take the liberty of family connection, and draw largely on your good-nature in compelling you to visit us frequently."

"On the understanding that such is the tendency of your ill temper, you may aggravate me as much as you please. Good-night."

As soon as Isabel vanished, the scene darkened to Hugh

(though the merriment and genuine festivity of the entertainment were perceptibly increasing), and he was debating whether he should not make his exit, when a voice behind him said,

"What has kept you in this room all the evening? Do you wish to leave with an unfavorable impression of my newly-acquired splendors?"

"To make an honest confession, I have met this evening, for the first time for eight years, a cousin who was a great favorite of mine when she was a child. It is she who has kept me from paying due attention to your new decorations."

"If you have now fully and completely offered your sacrifices to family affections," returned Mrs. Dalmaine, good-naturedly, "come and pass judgment on the vases, and then I'll let you waltz with my pretty niece, whom every one is scrambling for."

An hour later, Hugh was walking down the stairs into the hall with the intention of getting away, when Leonard Ambleby touched him on the shoulder and whispered something in his ear.

"Kate? I thought it was the other," Hugh answered, rather peevish at the interruption to his thoughts.

"So it was," returned Leonard, excitedly, though in a low voice. "And I did first propose to Julia, who refused me instanter, apparently thinking it was not in good taste my addressing her on such a subject at such a time; so I pocketed the affront, and, without allowing five minutes to intervene, told Kate I was her devoted servant: she has been more kind in her reception. But I must return to her, and not stay here prosing with you."

"Have the ladies no brothers?"

"No. I sha'n't have to shoot any one, under any circumstances."

In another minute Hugh Falcon was in Park Lane, with a frosty wind sweeping down the pavement. Having light-

ed a cigar at a coffee-stall at the top of Oxford Street, he put up the collar of his overcoat, pulled his hat over his ears, and proceeded toward Gray's Inn, where he had for several years occupied a set of chambers.

So, after such a long period—a lapse of some eight years —he had seen Isabel! Not altered, only matured, he found her; just as simple and truthful as when she was a little girl, but in her earnest eyes more thought and patient consideration. She was startled at his first appearance, but not alarmed, as she would have been had he called up painful memories; on the contrary, she seemed pleased to see one who was a key to a thousand pleasant recollections. His saying that he had often nursed her child had caused her only a momentary surprise, and immediately she appeared to regard it as very natural and affectionate, but nothing more; clearly she had not for an instant construed his conduct as an indication that old hopes, long seemingly dead, had still life enough to prey on his vitals.

Was it possible that she had never suspected, never been informed of his love for her? She was very young when he passed that last autumn at Kilverton—little more than sixteen or seventeen; was it possible that she had never discerned the meaning of his attentions to her? If now ignorant, would she ever be enlightened? For him to avoid her, to reject her cordial and cousinly advances, would be to set her hunting for a cause for his apparent coldness and indifference to her affection. To be near her, to receive her kindness, to watch her caressing her child, would be fanning a slow fire that had long consumed him, and might still burst forth and destroy others.

The rector appeared a kindly old man, and one not likely to be inconsiderate of her enjoyments. She did not seem depressed or mournful; indeed, she was the picture of happiness; but what was there in that? Sorrow, he knew, could wear a mask, be a writer of comedies, a singer of humorous

songs, and a sprightly jester in journals and clubs. Still the rector was a kindly old man. How great was his age? Threescore years and ten? The cold wind blew over old men's graves—when would it beat on his?

It was a murderous thought. Hugh shuddered, and as he looked up from under the dark gables of Holborn at the cold stars, the cold wind, as it lashed against him with unsteady gusts, made him recollect the graves of the young also over which it careered, chill and bleak.

CHAPTER VII.

MORNING CALLS.

Mr. Everitt Brookbank woke late, breakfasted later, and made his toilet later still, on the day succeeding our visit to Mrs. Dalmaine's house in Park Lane. When the light of eleven o'clock of the morning, which is often figuratively termed *dawn*, broke on his eyes, it dispelled a vision of Frances Leatheby whirling round in his arms—to her delight, his triumph, and the jealousy of Lord Brigden and an entire legion of lesser rivals. It was close on noon when he emerged from the contracted den he dignified by the name of bedroom, and took possession of an easy-chair in his sitting-room, midway between the fire and a table on which figured the materials for breakfasting. A kettle was hissing and bubbling on the fire, and the eggs were all ready to be popped into the saucepan. The room was well furnished, abounding in arrangements for comfort, and it commanded an unexceptionable view of the Temple Gardens, and the river, busy with the silent life of crowded steam-boats, and bearing its customary burden of dead dogs and abomination a little way on to the sea. Altogether, Everitt, in his embroidered dressing-gown and cheerful room, did not seem badly placed in this world of hardship.

"Ah! a letter from the governor—dear old boy—and *the Times* also. Well, the latter may be detained yet longer, and be contented with a second place. The epistle of Captain George Brookbank, R.N., shall have precedence."

The seal was soon broken, and Everitt read what we will transcribe with an accuracy faithful even to accidental errors in orthography.

"DEAR BOY,—Don't imagine I have not writen to you because I have not had you in my mind. Quite the contrary, I assure you. For I have been thinking about you very much since your letter of last week, trying to put myself in your situation, to reggard the world from your point of view, which, of course, differs much from mine now, and not a little from what mine was in days that have vannisht. For times have altered materially—thank God, the change is for the better; but you are of the present, and I belong to the old school.

"As to your working or not at the law, I have long felt you ought to please yourself, and likewise have seen you would not stick to it enough to accomplish any thing. Perhaps I should have found more grattification of my pride in your rising to be a great man. What father would not? but I nevver cared enough about it to think of urging you with a strong appeal; and I was aware that just a carless hint that I knew you were not insepperable from your books would do no good, and only make you uneasy. And now that the catasstrophe of your poor cousin's death has made you your uncle's heir, you can not be said to be in a position where care for the feelings of your family ought to spur you on to exertion.

"Besides my retiring pension, I have only £700 a year; of this you have had £350 annually ever since you comenced going to Cambridge; and the whole unencumbered and without embarrassment will be yours when I am no more. I

have nevver given you a grater allowance, though many of your acquainetances, doubtless, have had twice, thrice, or four times the sum, because I could not have been more generous without depriving myself of luxuries which you would not like your father to be without. And I must allow you have always manifested true affection for me in avoiding pecuniary difficulties, and in mannaging so well that you have continually made me—and God bless you for them—expensive presents out of your pocket. So much, then, for your profession and money matters. You may rest assured, lad, that I speke honestly in declaring that I don't want you to look into a law-book again.

"And now for the other matter. Boy, I have been thinking about it, and you, and her, both in my walks and solitary sittings in the evenning; and when I have been laying awake at night, I have been full of you, and more than once my eyes have brimmed with tears, and I have seemed to see your mother bending over you as she used to do when you were a little boy. Don't be faint-hearted. If you ought to prosper, you will.

"As to Miss Leatheby's large fortune, apart from wishing you blessed with wealth and all other good things, I don't think any thing about it, nor ought she—nor does she, if she is worthy of you. You don't go to her as a fortune-hunter, and no one but a rival will be fool enough to call you so. A few years, and you will be a baronet, with a moderate fortune of twelve hundred a year; certainly money is on her side, but not enough to materially alter your position; and, if things must be measured so exactly, you have the advantage in family. Not that I am at all a stickler for blood, as to high or low being best; I am inclined to think 'tis six on one side and half a dozen on the other. When I was in the service, the few dirty rogues I came in contact with were in every case of old birth, and the two most chivalric gentlemen I knew in early life were sons of shop-keepers; but still,

this proves little. Let me hear how it goes on. My advice is, *don't snigger snagger*. A bold stroke, and a good stroke, is my motto.

"There's nothing stirring here. Martha's son has married, and I gave him the wedding sute. Charley gets on well, and, since his teeth have been looked to, eats his corn and looks all the better for it; his coat is like velvet. The doctor, Colonel Bandy, the rector, and I, go on with our rubbers. The night before last, when we were over our toddy at the doctor's, Bandy asked, with a laugh, when you thought of marrying. I fancied they must have heard me talk in my sleep; but it was all by accident, and they knew nothing. And now I am your very affectionate father,

"GEORGE EVERITT.

"P.S.—When I proposed to your mother, I had not fifty pounds a year, besides my pay, in the world, and she had close on eighteen thousand. But she accepted me, and from our marriage-day we never thought about the money except to enjoy it. G. E."

Everitt read the letter through twice, every word of it, before he began to breakfast; and then, just as he made an entry into his first egg, the door opened, and in walked Hugh Falcon.

"You're just in time."

"Breakfasted two hours before this," answered Hugh.

"A letter from the dear old father; just read it, and say if you don't think him a trump."

Hugh took the epistle and deliberately perused it while his companion was demolishing slices of bread and butter and draining down cups of tea.

"Bless his heart!" said Hugh, emphatically, when he had finished it. "I wonder if such a father would have made me a better man. My parent died when I was eight years old. He was a choleric fellow with black whiskers, and used to

flog me and poor Jack with a dog-whip if we dared to enter the house without wiping every speck of dirt off our shoes on the mat."

"Look here, Hugh." Everitt called the attention of his friend to a small folio of drawings, which he opened reverentially, as if he touched what was holy.

"Ha!—portrait of lady!—very elegant, upon my word."

"Don't you think it like her?" asked Everitt, disappointed at not hearing raptures of admiration.

"'Tis not like her in the upper part of the face."

"You're right. It misses that devout cheerfulness of expression."

"The likeness certainly misses that," answered Hugh, dryly.

"What are you so sententious and reserved for? Don't you think she'll have me?" inquired Everitt, quickly.

"I know nothing, or next to nothing, about her, except what I hear from you, whose judgment is just now influenced by affection," answered Hugh, with a laugh. After a pause he added, "Did you exchange words with Lord Brigden last night?"

"I could not help it. He wore an air of cordiality, as he always has done to me, rallied me about not coming to his chambers in the Albany, and when the Leathebys left Mrs. Dalmaine's to go to Lady Bristwicke's, he insisted on taking me with him there. Her ladyship is his cousin, and intimate with him. He evidently detects my passion, and *at least feigns* a desire it should be gratified; but I can not trust him."

"He's an objectionable fellow—a complete scoundrel; that is my candid opinion of him. I took wine with him last week in queer company."

"How? where?"

"On a second floor in London Wall."

"Impossible!" said Everitt, opening his eyes.

"Lord Ropering you are aware of, at least by name. That respectable peer of the realm commenced life at twenty-one as a married man, and a devout patron of religious meetings in the country, over which, in speeches and prayer, he presided. On attaining the age of twenty-five, he came, by his father's death, into possession of the title and twenty thousand a year. Within two years from that time he was divorced from his wife at her suit, and within ten years was irretrievably ruined in purse. I watched him as he was pitched about from one solicitor to another, and then from one accountant to another: Blackey, of Little Rider Street, pitched him over to Abrahams, of Red Lion Street, who soon flung him away as worthless; Kite, of Gray's Inn, then picked him up, sucked a little blood and water from him, and let him go as not worth keeping. At length he has lighted on his legs in London Wall. Bodger, an obscure rogue, has kept him there, for months, in his rooms, supplying him with board, lodging, and ten shillings a week pocket-money, on the chance of repaying himself out of some funds he will never raise on his client's life-interest in the Ropering estates. Last week Bodger met me in Holborn, and asked me to favor him with my company to dinner. Out of curiosity, and perhaps a dim prevision that the accountant might be useful to me as in days of old, I went at the appointed hour, and, to my astonishment, found Lord Ropering a part of the establishment. We three dined off a tough beefsteak and bread and cheese; beer came from a public house hard by, and there were some bottles of sherry in waiting. After the repast, we smoked and drank the said sherry, and while we were so engaged, who should walk into the room but Lord Brigden, with a cold sneer on his lips? Bodger, who had been swelling with pride in showing off his noble guest to me, was clearly not well pleased with the irruption of this second distinguished visitor, who had come uninvited. There was not a fourth wine-glass for him, so Bodg-

er hospitably made use of a tumbler himself, and had his own small glass washed fresh for his lordship. Harmony soon pervaded the proceedings. Ropering gave the toast of 'the privilege of peers from arrest,' and in his speech favored us with the particulars of an altercation he had that afternoon had with a tobacconist who was one of his creditors, and we all enjoyed ourselves with the exception of our host. I left at about nine or half past, and had not proceeded ten yards on my way home when I heard a voice behind me, and, turning, saw Bodger. 'Just so,' said the poor little man; 'there's the shark after his prey. Ropering never has five pounds in his pocket but he goes and loses it to Lord Brigden. The last time he had any great sum was more than a year ago, when Levi and Blow made their last advance of eight hundred pounds on the Brentham Farm. Well, what became of that? He was on his way here to see me, with the honestest intentions, I do verily believe, when Lord Brigden met him, and they went—you'll hardly believe it—into a public in Little Britain, and drank sherry cobbler at four o'clock in the afternoon, and by Jove, sir, they set to work pulling straws for a hundred pounds a straw, and Ropering lost every penny he had in his pocket, and gave his I.O.U. for a thousand pounds besides. It is not the money only that Lord Brigden cares about, but the pleasure also of sucking the last breath out of a dying friend!' Little Bodger grew quite poetical on the subject."

"Can you credit such a story?" asked Everitt.

"I know every word of it to be true. I could tell you more revolting stories of that man."

"And Frances Leatheby allows him to approach her! If she did but know his character!"

"And yours also," put in Hugh, with a laugh. "Then it would be all right."

"Hugh, don't discourage me. I must die or win."

"Then I honestly hope you'll triumph."

"I dare not hope for success. It is monstrous insolence my competing with men of rank and fortune. If I could but get into the House now, and show I had some capability in me to make her take rank among the great ones!"

Hugh burst out laughing. "How worldly you youngsters get immediately you fall in love with the moon! almost as much so as you are unselfish and disinterested when all is smooth and you have every thing you wish for! This time last year you would have scorned the thought of making court to an heiress by displaying to her your prospects of becoming a privy councilor. Where's all your rant gone about art, and philanthropy, and self-devotion to your race? What has become of your contempt for men seeking their private ends under professions of anxious exertions for the public weal? Since you are ready to truckle, what's your price? Would you be purchased by a place of two thousand a year?"

Everitt's face betrayed that he writhed internally under this address, and it was with no slight burst of irritation that he replied to it. "You're grown suddenly very severe on moral infirmity."

Hugh remained silent for a minute, and then answered, "Don't judge me wrongly, Everitt. If you are unjust to me now, you won't be so after ten minutes' reflection. You can not believe I could find pleasure in paining you. I have a great admiration for you, and have had, ever since you were a lad in jackets. You are younger than I am by six or seven good years; but that, when you were a child and I was already a man, did not prevent our being fast friends, and from that time to this we have been close together, and never had a misunderstanding. It is not probable I should play lightly with the feelings of such a companion. If I have touched you up now, and often just lately, it has been in the wish to save you from the risk of placing your heart where it may not be valued. I don't say Miss Leatheby *won't* accept you; but, as you say, she is what is called high above

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you. A hundred other men are out after her, and it'll be a fierce race, and if you don't win her, you'll lose more than all the rest of the unsuccessful ones." Hugh paused for several seconds before he concluded: "As to my being severe on moral infirmity, you should not have said that, who know so well what my career has been; how my talents have been frittered away, how laughter is only my way of crying; how, even at my early age, I see I have lost the game of life, and how I have to contend with a thousand difficulties. You shouldn't have said it."

Everitt jumped from his seat, and, squeezing his friend's hand, begged him to pursue the subject no farther; so it was dropped, and Hugh responded, "You're a princely fellow, Everitt. You have as good a brain as I had at your age, and, in addition to it, firmness and strength of purpose, and a heart like the sun. If you don't run on a rock, you'll be, before you die, not only a great man, but a truly happy one; and could I but see you that for ever so short time, I should not care if I ended my days in a lunatic asylum."

The news in *The Times*, and some occurrences that had lately taken place among some mutual friends, formed the materials of conversation for another hour, after the expiration of which time Hugh rose to depart.

"Can't you stop longer?"

"No; I must go home to dress, and then sally forth to make some calls. I am going to pay my respects to Mrs. Harrie Dillingborough."

"Mrs. Harrie Dillingborough!"

"The same," Hugh answered, calmly; "I met her last night at Mrs. Dalmaine's. Did you not see me talking to the *second* prettiest woman there?"

"And you call at her house this afternoon?"

"By appointment. Are you alarmed?"

Everitt was grave for half a minute, and then replied, "No, for you can always think for others, though not for yourself."

Why did Hugh that afternoon, after leaving Everitt, and before walking to Westminster, spend six times his usual amount of care on his personal decoration? Why did he touch up his locks so critically, dashing them with drops of scent? and why, with patient endurance of pain, did he extract with tweezers half a dozen obdurate bristles from the dimple in his chin? Why did he try on three coats and half a dozen waistcoats before he was habited to his satisfaction? And, when taking a general review of his appearance in the largest mirror his rooms contained, the which we may parenthetically observe was dingy and cracked across the middle, why did he smile and say, "You're not such a bad looking fellow, after all, Mr. Hugh Falcon?" Did he desire to capture Isabel's heart? He would have knocked the man down who had dared to suggest such a charge. Was he ambitious of making a favorable impression on Mrs. Dillingborough? Honestly, he had no thought of doing so.

"You are very little altered," said Isabel, when they had exchanged the first greetings.

She was sitting on a chair drawn close up to the fire, and her feet were buried in a down rug. Very much at ease, and very happy too, seemed Mrs. Harrie Dillingborough in her comfortable rooms.

"You are very little altered."

"Not much in person."

"Nor in mind, if I may judge from last night, when you seemed as gay as ever."

"I have capital spirits, thank God. But don't talk about me; tell me about yourself."

"Where shall I begin?" asked Isabel, with a laugh.

"At the end. We'll go by degrees to the beginning. The last time I saw you before last night was eight years ago, at Kilverton. You were then the loveliest child of Nature man ever put eyes on; so untaught and so wise, so powerful and so submissive. Do you recollect how I used to get you up

in your French lessons for your mamma in the morning? and when you had said them, and got *all good marks*, how we used to go out to the Lymm, and, sitting on the banks, make a pretense, late into the summer evenings, of fishing? I am inclined to think that I used to throw in the hook without baiting it, so that we might not be so cruel to the poor fish as to catch them. Then, when you took it into your head that you would learn to ride, do you remember my getting a lady's saddle in Witherstone, and giving you equestrian lessons, you being allowed to use the Shetland pony, that ordinarily had no more dignified occupation than that of a market-carrier? And what a battle I had with Uncle Potter to get him to allow you to read *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*? And when he at last consented, do you remember how we sat hour after hour under the mulberry-tree on the lawn, I reading aloud and you listening? Your papa would not permit us to have any more of the pernicious books, so we went through *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* three times, and cried as much over it the last time as we did the first."

Tears came to Isabel's eyes at these reminiscences.

"But we are all wrong," continued Hugh, with a laugh. "We determined just now that you should commence with the end, and here I am working away at the beginning. Are you as happy now as you were then?"

"That is a hard question for me to answer. I can scarcely recall the outlines of what I was then. Your quick words have accomplished more in resuscitating the past than my memory could have done by itself with its utmost exertions. I am much wiser, more firm in character, juster in my views of life than then, but I am afraid I am not better." Her voice was very solemn.

"I asked if you are happy."

"Yes, I am happy, Hugh. I have much to make me so. My husband is a good man, and very fond of me; his chil-

dren and family profess warm affection for me, and I have my own darling boy. Many women think me to be envied; some, who don't know me, say—"

Isabel faltered, turned first pale and then red, and then added, "Say that I gave my hand to an old man for the sake of the worldly advantages—of wealth and position. God knows they judge me wrongly! In the common sense of love, I loved my father, my mother, and their children; I was very fond of you, for you always were so considerate of me; but—"

"This pains you. Why touch on such a subject to me? Don't again, I implore you."

"I did not intend, Hugh," answered Isabel, with tears in her eyes; "but when you recurred to those old days, when I was as perfectly happy as a good child can be, before I had writhed under the insulting calumnies of those who never have the charity to search into the circumstances of my early life, I could not bear that you should harbor a suspicion that I was other than what I seemed."

"I could not so suspect you, Isabel."

She was soon calm again, and turning her glance, with her old half-timid, half-playful expression up to her cousin, observed, "How strange it is you have not married! I wish you were."

"How, strange?"

Isabel laughed. "Why, surely you have a heart to love and be loved; and you are so admired and so sought after in society that I can not imagine you would find it difficult to win where you wooed."

"You are complimentary."

"Indeed, I would be sincere to you."

"Perhaps experience proves your good opinion of me to be undeserved."

"How so?"

"Perhaps I have wooed where I have not won, and, hav-

ing lost once, I can never again wish to win," said Hugh, sadly.

"I did not know that, Hugh. I was careless not to have thought of it. Oh, my dear cousin, may you only be as happy as you deserve!" answered Isabel, with warmth and true womanly delicacy—not shrinking from the wound her idle words had vexed, but gently giving it the healing touch of sympathy.

At this moment the door opened, and in trotted, in his gayest suit, Master Harrie Dillingborough, to greet his trusty friend Ivan Ivanowitz. Of course the young gentleman was not many seconds in the room before he made his voice heard, and also made it clear to his mamma and her visitor that there was small chance, while he was present, of any conversation in which he did not take part. The tyranny, however, of his tongue was soon broken in upon by the appearance of Captain Frederick Dillingborough, who, as he bade Isabel good morning, gave Hugh a stare, half of recognition.

"I am delighted to see you, Frederick, so that I can introduce you to my cousin."

"Ah! Mr. Falcon!" answered Captain Dillingborough. "I thought I knew the face. We had the pleasure of meeting three years since in Bedfordshire, at Brodenham Hall."

Hugh remembered the circumstance well, and said so; he remembered also that he had then set down Captain Frederick Dillingborough as the most insolently haughty man he had ever come in contact with: this, however, he did not put in words. The introduction having been renewed by Isabel, her step-son was all urbanity and cordiality to Hugh, was charmed to renew their acquaintance now that they were united by a family tie, had just read an article in the St. Stephen's Chronicle, a very clever one, which he had been informed Mr. Falcon had written, &c., &c. As Hugh happened to have penned the article alluded to, he will not be charged with morbid vanity when it is admitted that he was

pleased with this accidental mention of his performance, since it tended to show that the emanations from his pen were not devoid of gossip-interest to the readers of the journal just mentioned.

When Hugh, after playing a hundred and fifty tricks with little Harrie, took leave, Captain Dillingborough, not at all in accordance with his customary collected stateliness, accompanied him down stairs, and, ere they separated, took steps to efface any unpleasant feelings Hugh might retain for him.

"I have been showing Mr. Falcon the library," said Captain Dillingborough, a quarter of an hour afterward, on again entering Isabel's drawing-room. "I thought he might like to see that his Political Tracts, the only two of his volumes a clergyman could be expected to care for, had their place on one of the shelves."

Isabel was gratified by an attention which was at least delicate toward her.

"He's a handsome and an agreeable fellow," observed Frederick.

"Very much so, and with many other good qualities. Till yesterday I had not seen him for eight years at least, and had forgotten almost every thing about him except that he used to be very kind to me."

"You've been recalling old times, then?" asked the son, eyeing Isabel narrowly, and to himself noting that she evinced signs of having undergone considerable excitement in her interview with her relation.

"Yes," replied Isabel, simply, telling him all he was about to work out of her with the ingenuity of a detective policeman. "And, will you credit it? I have shed a few tears over the past—not that I have any cause for regret, as far as I am concerned."

"Then, is your grief for him?"

"Grief is too grave and weighty a word to use on this oc-

casion. I only shed a few tears, and they were not for him. I am, though, afraid his life has not been a happy one, poor fellow!"

Isabel had, ever since the grand battle that took place soon after her marriage in the Brandon Close, maintained very confidential and agreeable relations with Frederick Dillingborough. She imparted to him all her interests and cares, with a few points of reserve, as she would have done had he been a favorite brother; and he won her gratitude and affection by never-failing attention. If she wished to go any where where his father could not attend her, he was always at her command; when she was in London, he kept her well supplied with the best and brightest of flowers; and when she was in the country, he furnished her with weekly packets of London news. So, now, inviting him to sit on a sofa by her side, she imparted to him many more particulars of her warm, cousinly affection for Hugh than, in all probability, she would have done had she trembled under the snaky coldness of his eye, as some, who knew him well, did, or had she had a perfect insight into his nature.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PORCH IN THE ALLEY.

Not frosty, but keenly cold; no breeze through the close streets, but a raw bleakness in the atmosphere; no fog sufficient to make wayfarers proceed with caution, but mist enough to obscure the gas-lamps and give pickpockets courage; a slimy oozing from every cranny and cleft in the pavement, a black tenacious mud in the carriage-ways; cheerless and depressing—such was the night Hugh Falcon found around him in the great city on emerging from his club, where he had dined, and over a jug of claret mused on the call made that morning to his old love, and pondered on all

she had said, and looked, and done. What should he do? was the question he asked of himself, as he drew his coat close round him, standing on the steps of the Athenæum. He had cards for two or three parties of the Mrs. Dalmaine order. Should he go to one or all of them, and sing his songs, amid the growlings of the men that he was an ostentatious coxcomb, and the longings of simple girls to be always merry, and live in continual laughter, like that ridiculous Mr. Falcon? No, not that one night.

With no especial object in view, only determined to avoid quarters where friends would be likely to catch him by the arm and insist on accompanying him, he walked on through streets deserted and silent squares, through markets busy with the poor purchasing their modest stores in a buzz of excitement, under the flare of huge gas jets, and through labyrinths of courts and lanes full of wrangling women and skulking misery, every now and then crossing a thoroughfare down which carriages swiftly rolled, throwing on all sides a shower-bath of dark, oily slime!

After thridding such an intricate web of grotesque humanity, without heeding any one before or behind him, it was almost with a start of astonishment that Hugh found his attention arrested by a group of figures sitting on the step of a church door, under a stone covering supported by pillars.

The porch was almost of elegant structure, but it was placed in a narrow yard not nine feet wide, as if stuffed away by a caprice anxious to conceal it because it was good to be looked upon. The court was very quiet, few straggled into it, and those who did so appeared either to have lost their way, or to be languid mortals in search of a quiet spot whereon to lie down and rest. One lamp fixed to the corner of the church made the objects at that end of the passage dimly visible, and threw a vivid light in front of those weary toilers who, in the dark shade of the door, were, without interchange of words, resting a while.

One person rose slowly to his limbs and crept away; a second soon followed the example, and in half a minute more a third departed from the cold stone that had refreshed him. There remained two women, sitting apart and strangers to each other, one with her arms folded together in a once smart cotton shawl; the other meanly clad, as the occupant of a door-step might be expected to be, and nursing a child in her arms.

Hugh saw that they commenced talking; whereupon he crossed over unobserved, and with a curiosity not altogether inexcusable, listened from behind one of the columns to their interview.

"It is a cold night," said the girl with the folded arms, in a thick voice.

"Very cold. I have been pinched; but 'tis warmer here, I think, than in the streets."

"Of course. One expects a yard to be warmer. But it's a bitter night for a child to spend in the open air. Whose is it?"

"Mine. Whose should it be?" answered the mother, sharply.

"I only asked."

"And 'twas my husband's too, afore he died."

"Thank God for that!" said the girl, softly.

A pause.

"Darling!" said the mother, relenting; "darling, sit nigher to me; we shall be warmer close together. I ought not to have spoken so hardly. I beg your pardon, dear."

The girl was startled at the kind tones, but she drew near in obedience to the invitation.

"You see," continued the mother, becoming more communicative, "I have no one to leave Nancy with, and I could not let her be at home alone; for she can't take care of herself, and if a mishap were to come to her I should never forgive myself. God grant his blessing to her! How sweetly she

does sleep!" As she spoke, she made the child's flannel cloak (her own shawl was thin cotton) fit closer to her neck and feet.

"How old is she?"

"Past six; she's a wonderfully little thing, but extraordinary good."

"Your husband is dead, you said?"

"He died long ago—just after Nancy was christened. If it had but pleased God to spare him, I should be faring better now. He was a good man—a right good man. Once, when he was ill, he said to me, putting his poor hand up to my head and bringing it down to his mouth, 'Nancy, if I die, and God pardon my sins and take me to heaven, you'll have to die soon, Nancy, for it won't be Paradise without you;' and then he cried like a child. He wasn't often so, but he was always tender."

"What became of you when he died?"

"I was very unfortunate indeed. God tried me very sore, but I doubt not in mercy, dear. You see my husband was a sailor, now working to one port and now another, and he was born abroad, so we belonged exactly to no particular place; and when he died up here in London, I was hard put to it. He, poor man, had saved a little money, and so I hoped to do; but I fell into a fever, and when I came round from that, my arm became bad, and I was took and put into a hospital."

As she spoke, she raised her right arm and showed that the hand had been amputated above the wrist.

The girl gave a cry of horror. "Lor! how was that done?"

"It was took off five years agone, in the hospital. When I was discharged cured, I had Nancy to provide for as well as myself, and only a left hand to work with. It was very hard."

"It was cruel."

"No, no, dear—not cruel, for so it pleased God. It was only hard—I wanted a start."

"And you did not get it. The rich ain't fond of giving starts to the poor," put in the girl, bitterly.

"You mayn't speak so, darling, for 'tis wrong. There may be bad among the rich—I am sure there are among the poor; but I've found many merciful and charitable friends amid the powerful and wealthy. Only think o' the hospitals—built up and kept out of the purses of the fortunate! You can't think how good they were to me what time I was laid up with my arm; the doctors allus spoke gently to me, as if they felt all I could tell 'em, and that without asking, and were as sorry for it as I myself was; then the young surgeon, who dressed me every morning, he never tired with doing for me, cheering me up when I was down with lively sayings, and handling me as tender as if I had been his sister or his mother. 'Sir,' said I to him, the last morning but one afore I was discharged, 'may God reward you! for I can only thank you;' and I tried to say more, but I couldn't. 'Sister,' said he, 'don't let your gratitude be a burden to you, for I'm only doing my duty. To attend to the sick is my profession.' 'Yes, sir,' I answered, finding voice, 'but we are such poor outcasts that it seems almost demeaning to a gentleman for him to wait on us.' 'Not so,' said he, calling me 'sister' again; 'it's the noblest work we can be at. You know who passed years so doing, more than eighteen hundred years ago.' And as his morning's work was done, he opened my Bible and read a chapter to me. This touched me very much then, and so it has done often in the thinking of it."

The girl sat in silence, and then folding her arms tighter over her breast, made her sullen comment. "A very good young man, I dare say; a very good man. I never said there were no good folks. The hospital doctors do their work, but then they're paid for it."

"No, they're not—not a penny," answered the woman, earnestly pleading the cause of her benefactors. "You don't know 'em, or you wouldn't talk so of 'em. The great doctors and surgeons who come to the hospitals are rich and mighty gen'lmen; live in grand mansions and ride in their carriages, and whenever they like, can earn handfuls of gold by feeling a lord's or a duke's pulse; yet they come to the hospitals, where there are none but low and stricken people, and work for nothing—all for nothing—there ain't a penny of the hospital money ever reaches them."

The girl was staggered by the assurance.

"No one knowing this can talk hard things of the rich," continued the woman. "It's a difficult world we live in, I know, dear, and we ignorant ones can't make it out; and it does make one groan and grind inside to toil along weary through the streets, hungry, and wet through, and fainting and footworn, and to see the great and grand entering splendid shops to waste hundreds on luxuries, and to look at their carriages dashing along in which they sit easy—and we can't find a step to rest on. But whenever my heart gets jealous and discontented, I cure it in this wise: I fix my eyes on some grand coach drawn by fine horses, with a gentleman inside, and I say to myself, 'There go a fiesishian or a surgeon a-gallopin on to the 'ospital, God bless him!' And then I feel quite happy again, and don't grumble no more. Bless you, girl, the rich have their trials full as much as the needy; you know what Scripter says of them, how hard it is for 'em to enter into the kingdom of heaven; and I can quite understand it, for pomps and vanities are so charming, that we, who can never take part in them, can't help fretting and thinking about 'em—only fancy, *if we had 'em*, how difficult it would be not to be too fond of 'em! Oh! you are awake, are you?"

The question was addressed to the child in her arms, who stretched out its hands and began to prattle.

The church clock struck the hour of nine slowly and heavily.

"It'll be late afore I get home, and then it won't be no use trying to wake the beauty into understanding, she'll be so dead tired. She'd better say 'em now," observed the woman, speaking aloud, but to herself; and then turning to her companion, she addressed her as one lady might a friend in her drawing-room. "Would it disturb you, dear, if Nancy was to say her prayers here? I don't like her to leave 'em till later than this; and as for a place, why any place will do; but if it can't be at home, or *in a church*—why, I like the outside of one, dear. It may seem foolish o' me; but all things have their uses, and, as I say, if there wasn't a use in them, churches wouldn't have outsides."

Folding her arms together more tightly still, and biting her lips to keep down some strong emotion, the girl said hoarsely, "Let her pray; I'll stop and listen."

Kneeling on the church step by her mother's side, with her hands folded and placed on her mother's lap, the little girl said her prayers. The black sky was above her, and the cold wet ground was at her feet, but her lips uttered the same words of supplication that children happier in their fortunes, reared in warm nurseries with all the fostering aids of wealth, trained to wear dignity gracefully as a flower, addressed that night to Our Father who is in heaven—that universal prayer Christ taught us.

"She said 'em sweetly," remarked the girl, gruffly, compelling herself to speak. "I had a little sister who used to say 'em to me."

The woman now put her child on the stone step by her side, and with her one hand busied herself in getting out from the bottom of the basket, which she bore on her maimed arm, some bread and fragments of meat, and a long black bottle.

"Have a morsel with us, dear. Bread and meat is what

it is, and i' the bottle we have good fresh water, and here's a little drop o' gin to cure the cold o' the night, which is cutting."

"I ain't hungry, thank you," answered the poor girl. "But I must just take a crumb, if it be only to show I value your kindness. Let me nurse Nancy, just till you are ready to take her again. Do let me have her; it won't do her no harm."

This request was put so earnestly, and with such manifest effort, that the mother turned sharply to her and looked into her face for some seconds before she answered, "May you? sure you may, dear; and kiss her too, as if she were the little sister you spoke of."

"What color are her eyes?" the girl asked, after she had taken Nancy to her knees and made friends with her.

"Don't talk of 'em, darling. If it wasn't so dark, you'd see they weren't to be praised," the mother answered, softly. "Poor Nancy! she's blind!"

The three ate their supper without any further allusion to this painful subject, and indeed without much conversation on any matter, for Nancy and her mother had keen appetites, and devoured their wretched fragments of food with relish, and their guest apparently was habitually taciturn.

"Well, we must be moving," said the woman, when the repast was concluded, returning the bottle to its place at the bottom of her basket, under the stock of combs and silk stay-and-shoe laces she was vending.

"Here's Nancy, then," rejoined the girl; and, she added with emotion, "I am very sorry for her—I am very grieved for her misfortune; can't she be cured?"

The mother shook her head, and tears were in her eyes as she answered, "No, dear, naught can be done for her. A gentleman, and a very charitable one too, who keeps a doctor's shop in the Whitechapel Road, told me there was nothing to be circumvented for her, and she must even go as God made her."

"Poor little dear! how very helpless she'll be when you're gone."

"God won't desert her, darling," answered the woman, boldly. "I feel assured He won't. He'll raise up some one to help her; I know He will. I'll tell what I should wish for her, and 'tis that some benevolent person would take and put her where she'd be very kindly treated, and where I could see her as often as I liked, and have her taught a trade—say basket-plaiting, and then have the same charitable person take care that she got enough work to support herself by it; for they tell me 'tisn't always a blind hand, after learning a trade, can make a living against them as can see. I'd rather have this happen than have the child gifted with the means of living outright, for there's nothing to poverty that is so sweet as independence. I know it well—I know it well! When I've been so hard pressed, not being able to keep me and Nancy out of the sellings of my poor basket, that I haven't known where to look for a supper for Nancy, I've begged a penny i' the streets to find it with; but, bless you, swallowing the bread that was bought with it was like eating disgrace."

The girl assented with uttering, "'Tis so—'tis so."

"But Nancy won't be left alone," continued the mother. "Perhaps you think me dreaming, and apt to fancy good things; but ofttimes as I sit a-resting, it may be i' the streets as now, or it may be at home, I amuse myself with picturing different kinds o' people, men or women, old or young, that I should like to have step forrard and do as I say for Nancy, and sometimes I even go so far as positively to see some one a-coming, and just as I say, 'Ah! that's he! God bless him!' I stare round and find there's nobody, but 'tis only my fancyings."

She was silent for several seconds, and then recommenced with increased earnestness. "He'll come—I know he will; and his goodness sha'n't be unrewarded, even in this world. I'll follow him unseen; I'll keep the very shoes he treads in

out of the dirt, and he sha'n't know it; there sha'n't be harm plotting agin him any where but I'll know it, and save him from it. God bless him!" Her voice at length was choked to silence, and she drew her sleeve across her eyes, to wipe away the tears of gratitude shed in honor of her coming benefactor.

"I hope he 'ont be slow in coming," observed the girl, rising together with her companion.

"In God's own time—it'll be fulfilled," was the answer. "You know the promise—the seed of the righteous sha'n't be forsaken, or beg their bread, and Nancy's father was a good man—a pious man—a devout man. But, Lord take you to his keeping! are you hurt at what I've been a saying?"

"Don't mind me—don't mind me," implored the girl, sobbing violently. "You are so good, you speak to me like a home, as if you hadn't a scorn of me. I don't know how I came to be so bold as to talk with you, for I haven't exchanged words with one who wasn't bad for years."

Much more of a similar purport, and in the same broken voice and forcible manner of grief, she uttered, beating her breast and stamping on the ground.

"Don't leave me, then, if you like me," said the woman, catching hold of the girl's arm. "I am almost as destitute as you; but I and Nancy have a room far away, right down in Whitechapel. Come home with us to-night and sleep along with me, and to-morrow we'll turn about and see how you can best start out to do better."

"I daren't—I can't—I won't," answered the girl, in the bitterness of anguish. "I wouldn't wrong Nancy with lying my wretched body on her bed. You don't know me, or you wouldn't offer me so much. I'm a drunkard, a liar, a thief. I worn't so always, but I'm come to it. If I joined with you now, afore to-morrow I should steal your blanket and pawn it for drink. I daren't trust myself. But it don't matter what becomes of me; it won't be for long, for I sha'n't

long trouble the world." And, bending forward, she whispered in the other's ear.

"Heaven help you! Christ protect and pardon you!" ejaculated the mother. "O, pray to God before it is too late! do, I implore you! do pray!"

"I couldn't dare. If I uttered a prayer to God, it would curse me, for an evil spirit would catch hold on it and carry it to the devil."

"I'll pray for you," responded the woman, softly, but courageously, showing resolve in her clear, low voice, and at the same time dropping her head in humility.

But the Christian promise did not reach the unfortunate girl's ears. Gliding rapidly away into the dimness of the narrow alley, away from the church, away from the only human heart there was in the wide world to show her love, away from the rescuer she was afraid to cling to, she disappeared, leaving Nancy and her mother on the porch steps, with Hugh Falcon standing by them, that cold, drear night, under the black heavens!

CHAPTER IX.

A DISCLOSURE AND A DISCOVERY.

QUOLIBET STREET is, as every one knows, one of the peculiar nests of surgeons and physicians. A large number of people who frequent Quolibet Street for medical advice are supposed, by polite society, to be altogether ignorant of the quarter of the town in which it is placed. What Lombard and Threadneedle Streets are to gentlemen of a fashion that does not permit them, under ordinary circumstances, to come eastward within sight of Temple Bar, Quolibet Street, which, by the way, is not far distant from the Bank of England, is to valetudinarians of rank. It is, for the city, a wide thoroughfare, with stone-mounted and massive houses on either

side, of which a few are devoted to offices for insurance companies, and organized swindling associations of the purest Royal Exchange morality, and one, at least, is an imposing club-house; but with these exceptions, all the habitations, right and left, before and behind, up quiet little courts, and round all kinds of corners, in sight and out of sight, are held by philanthropic medical practitioners, ready, for a small consideration, to alleviate human misery, or for no consideration at all, to aggravate it up to a few degrees beyond death, just by way of experiment or scientific investigation.

After business hours in the city, Quolibet Street and its dependencies constitute the great rule-establishing exception to the desertion of the lord-mayor's kingdom by the wealthy; for the majority of the successful doctors of the Quolibet district reside therein with their wives and families, and keep up a liberal allowance of festivity around their Lares in dinners, and balls, and soirées, without having their peace of mind at all disturbed by the near vicinity of the Aldgate pump. The quarter has its heroes and heroines, its prejudices and predilections, its ambitions and jealousies, its merits and absurdities, exactly as the *Close* set of a cathedral town, or the members of any semi-collegiate body have their feuds and friendships, virtues and vanities. Mrs. Archer Bezzlegreen (called Mrs. Morbid Eye Bezzlegreen, from her husband's work on that interesting subject), the allowed leader of *ton* among *the best hospital set*, and whose annual ball is attended by various noble patients from May Fair, has *her* opinion of Dr. Grounder's lady, who, as we all know, is a very good sort of person, well-intentioned and all that, but not by birth and education designed for the wife of the man who was the first to administer large doses of lemon-juice and burnt almonds in rheumatic fever. Mrs. Grounder, of course, has *her* views, in return, with regard to Mrs. Archer Bezzlegreen, asserting that that lady is without heart, and that the only sound portion of Bezzlegreen's *Morbid Eye* was filched, with-

out any acknowledgment whatever, from Barlow's *Retina*. The tone of conversation in Quolibet Street is also professional, and, to a slight degree, sectarian, it being understood that in certain drawing-rooms miscroscopic research is to be spoken of with more respect than geological investigation; that in Professor Craskgrandle's presence phrenological discussion is to be avoided, and the Dodo to be brought on the carpet; and that any allusion before Mr. Demonstrator Plunkett to the white of egg is identical with premeditated insult; but in all circles globules are regarded as the creations of a puerile heresy.

It was between ten and eleven o'clock of the morning after the porch-scene in the last chapter, and the day was fresh and clear, for the wind had risen and blown away the tempestuous clouds of the previous night, when Hugh Falcon left Gray's Inn and proceeded in the direction of Quolibet Street, for the purpose of calling on his friend and medical adviser, George Hassell, Esq., F.R.C.S., or, as he was known in the circles of the faculty, Hassell's Aneurism. At that same time Richard Bannick, Esq., M.D., iron-gray, irritable, hook-nosed, rose from his breakfast table on the first floor of No. 45, and pitching "The Times" newspaper to Mrs. Bannick, went to the window, and, standing behind the curtain so as not to be seen, inspected the state of the street. Bannick's house was just at the bend of the thoroughfare, and was admirably adapted for a social observatory, as, indeed, Bannick himself was admirably adapted for a social observator.

"Bullock has had a good many people in," observed Dr. Bannick, testily, turning to his lady.

"How do you know?"

"His door-step shows me, to be sure, ma'am; how the deuce else should I know except by his door-step? Are you an idiot, ma'am? or do you think me a fool, ma'am?"

"His door-step's no sign," answered Mrs. Bannick, quietly.

"How? what do you mean?"

"Mr. Bullock has it pipe-clayed fresh every morning at nine, and then the servants come up the area steps with muddy shoes on, and walk one after the other into the house at the front door, so the marks of their feet may be taken for patients. I have had my eye on that step for days past, my dear; and if footprints are to be depended on, Mr. Bullock has four visitors every morning to his house who never leave. If there isn't trickery, his rooms must be full by this time, or he eats them as fast as they come in."

"As likely as not. He's rogue enough for any thing," said Dr. Bannick, appeased, but not at all surprised.

After a pause of a minute, the doctor observed, "Our door-step is in a positively disgraceful state. Tell the servants to wash it and pipe-clay it every morning, my dear."

"Of course I will. I would have done so before, only I did not know if you would like it."

"Mind me, ma'am," cried the doctor, with agitation, "I'm not going to sink into a humbug at my time of life, nor do I, so far as I can see, sacrifice professional dignity in what I have just now said. My request is a simple one—have my door-step pipe-clayed, and made to look as a door-step in this street ought to look. That's all I say. As to your domestic arrangements, I never dictate to you, and that you know very well. If, after the step has been cleaned, you think a little exercise would do the servants good, and for purposes of health you order them to trot up the area steps and enter the front door, why, in the name of common humanity, let the poor things do what's good for them! Only, ma'am, don't think that Dick Bannick, at his time of life, is going to sink into a professional humbug; for, if you do, you'll find yourself mistaken. Dick Bannick and Abernethy are men of the same grain. By Jove! there are three men now standing at Hassell's door. Ten years ago, if I had been told that man was going to turn over three thousand a year in the profession, I should have said he was just as likely to turn a mangle

out of it; and now there are three men ringing his patient's bell at the same time."

"All gratuitous, every one of them; nothing like gratuitous patients for decoy ducks! If you only let your left hand know what your right hand does, why in a very short time one will know as much as the other," replied Mrs. Bannick, soothingly and enigmatically.

"Hallo, here's a rap!" exclaimed the doctor, starting back. "Here, give me my spectacles, and the last number of the Medico-Chirurgical, so that I may be ready to run down."

Without any unnecessary delay, the maid-servant who responded to the summons at the front door came up to the doctor, who inquired, the instant she appeared, "Well, have you shown him into the consulting-room?"

"Please, sir," answered the girl, "it weren't nobody but a gentleman who only knocked and asked what number Mr. Hassell lived at?"

"Another gratuitous patient," put in Mrs. Bannick.

"Madam," returned the doctor, bitterly, in the tone of a cynic, and waving his hand grandly, as if addressing a learned society, "madam, the question simply resolves itself into this—have the courage, intellectual and moral, to answer it, and don't attempt to blink facts, for truth is omnipotent. Do gratuitous patients wear bran new hats?"

"Well, my dear, as a rule, they don't," answered Mrs. Bannick, candidly.

"Did you ever know a gratuitous patient—one single one, mark ye! I'm not talking of several—with a decent hat?" vociferated the doctor, suddenly throwing himself into the character of an Old Bailey counsel. "Now, on your solemn oath, did you?"

"I can't say I ever did," replied the lady, humbly.

"I thought not," rejoined the doctor, triumphantly. "And there, going into that illiterate donkey Hassell's house, is the fourth new hat that has been through his door

within the last ten minutes. And, by the holy poker, there's the fifth! And I know him!"

"Who is it?"

"The most impudent, lying, dishonest dog there is to be found in all London," answered the doctor, burning with rage toward Hassell, and Hassell's patients, and all the inhabitants of Quolibet Street who were more prosperous than himself. "He's Mr. Hugh Falcon."

"What! the celebrated author?"

"Celebrated author! I don't understand what you mean. "I'm not aware that such a being as a successful author is in existence, or, with the exception of Shakspeare, ever has been in existence. Penny-a-liners, publishers' hacks, scribblers, libel composers, rhymesters, poor devils who can't keep themselves from starving, and ought not to be able, if they could—such scoundrels, some with more money, some with less, I've heard of. But celebrated authors! Pugh, ma'am! I must beg you don't again utter such nonsense."

But as Dr. Bannick is a new friend, let us leave him and cross over Quolibet Street to our old acquaintance Hugh, in Mr. Hassell's patients' waiting-room.

For half an hour, luckily not for two or three hours, as it might well have been, Hugh had to sit in the surgeon's waiting-room, amusing himself as he was best able with scanning the appearances of the patients who dropped in to a considerable number, and with turning over the leaves of some volumes of Punch and the Illustrated London News.

By the exercise of unflagging ingenuity in cultivating these sources of pastime; by conjecturing the maladies with which the various patients were afflicted—whether they had fair chances of recovery — whether, if they died, their friends would have good reason to mourn; by calculating, taking twelve patients as an average morning's visitation, how many sick men entered that room in the course of the year; then, supposing one out of every twenty sick men died, how many

individuals since dead had, in the previous twelve months, stepped tremblingly through the door to inquire their doom; and, lastly, dividing the number of corpses by the number of chairs, how many in the same space of time had, in all probability, sat in that very chair he occupied—by such, and divers other appropriate ponderings, did Hugh contrive to push on Time out of his usual deliberate paces, till his turn for admittance to the consulting-room came, and he was announced to Mr. Hassell by a melancholy servant who looked on health as vanity, and on men as patients.

"Well, George, you've a tidy assemblage of victims in the room there. If they all give you good fees, you're not in a bad position for a contemner of wealth."

"I really don't want them to come."

"Of course not—they come. The case would be altered if they stopped away."

Mr. Hassell was a gentlemanly man in appearance, athletic and inclined to be stout, and with a face slightly florid in complexion, but thoughtful as well as benevolent in expression. His age did not exceed five-and-forty years, and his general aspect was that of a much younger man.

"And how are you? Nothing the matter, I hope," observed the surgeon.

"I am quite well, thank you. It is not about myself that I wish to occupy your attention."

"So far, so good. But, as your own health is not to be the topic of discussion, I will not allow you more than ten minutes before I have in my next patient."

"I want your opinion, in the first place, about a blind child in whom I am interested, as to whether there is any chance of restoring her sight. In the second place, you must give me your advice as to the best means of getting her educated, after she shall either be cured or pronounced incurable."

"Can you give me any further particulars?"

"I do not wish to be uncommunicative, but I honestly

have nothing more to say. As to my motive for taking this child under my protection, I can only say that I am under strong obligations to do so."

"I'm sorry to hear you say so," replied the surgeon, gravely, shaking his head. "Sorry for your sake—and for hers."

There was an awkward silence.

"You misunderstand me, and I may not allow you to do so," said Hugh, breaking the pause. "I must be more candid; but, first, you must make me a promise."

"It is made."

"'Tis to let all the pecuniary burden of the undertaking I have in hand rest on my own shoulders, even to permitting me to pay you the customary fees for your care of the child. I must insist on this. You won't find me less ready than heretofore in availing myself of your gratuitous aid in my own hours of indisposition; but if you assist me in the present instance, it must be as my workman."

"I've already promised."

With a smile of gratitude for the assurance, Hugh forthwith gave his friend a narrative of the particulars of the scene at the church porch.

"Now you have the entire case before you," he said, on concluding his statement. "Here is the poor creature's address, and she will remain at home till she shall see you or me. There is nothing more for me to add."

"I'll do all I can for her," said Hassell, his tongue faltering slightly and his eyes becoming just a twinkle brighter than usual. "But why not let me be your coadjutor, Hugh, instead of your workman? You shall supply any money the case may require, but let me *give* my services."

"You remember your promise?" rejoined Hugh, sharply. "By your honor you shall abide by it. 'Tis no merit in me wishing to do this charity, but selfishness—a superstitious selfishness. I heard that woman last night say what should be the reward of the man who did her this service, and she will

not fail to keep her word. She vowed she'd guard my life from some great evil, and (you may smile) her faith, strong enough to bring the heavens down to the earth, will accomplish her purpose; and you sha'n't share the prize."

"My last objection to your plan has been made. Henceforth I will be your obedient servant."

Hugh rose to leave, and was repeating his thanks to his friend for his goodness, when Mr. Hassell checked him with "By the way, have you been up to the Regent's Park, to your relations lately?"

"I am ashamed to say that I have not been for the last fortnight. But Emily sent me a line four days ago, notifying that all was well."

"So she would say if she were dying with trouble. But I know what that means. The old man, if he doesn't die, will drive her mad. He daily gets more irritable, and his delusions grow more painful to witness; but she will not listen to any proposition for finding him another nurse. She does not look nearly so well as usual. Don't forget to call and cheer her up when you can."

"Don't reproach me any more with my neglect."

"I am not doing that, my dear fellow," answered the surgeon, warmly. "You are all goodness."

"When I think of it and am in the mood."

"Have you seen Harvey lately?"

"Yes; and he sent me an invitation yesterday to dine with him next week. He's a good old fellow, and a genuinely benevolent man—though he is a Radical."

"Faugh! keep that nonsense for the papers."

Hugh laughed at the reproof. "But I wonder," he added, "what will be the conclusion of his attentions to Emily. Will he make her an offer?"

"Yes," replied Hassell, with great tenderness. "Most assuredly he will; and I dread it for both of them; it will give her such exquisite pain to refuse him, and the refusal *will cut* him to the heart."

"I wish she had more hardness."

"You would not like her less soft."

"No—no!" answered Hugh, with a sigh. "'Tis best to be as God has made us."

"'Thy will be done,'" repeated Hassell, softly.

"George, when the child said those words last night, I thought of your little girls. Give my love to them."

When Hugh had said this, the door closed upon him.

"Poor fellow! fine fellow!" observed the surgeon, in soliloquy. "Fashioned for a giant, and to do a giant's work, but now scarcely more than an ornament and a plaything. So lovable and loved, so pitied and so pitiable! Yet, still his heart is true. And he looks in better health. But I am afraid that can't last."

Click! click! went the surgeon's hand-bell, and immediately another patient was ushered in.

The interview with Mr. Hassell changed Hugh's intentions with regard to the way in which he should spend the remainder of the day; for, on turning out of Quolibet Street, instead of directing his steps to St. James's Street, where he had contemplated looking a friend up, he proceeded by a short cut to Mr. Allerton's house in Regent's Park. On his route, as was but natural, all the associations by which Emily Allerton and her little nephew were united to him rose before his mind. He thought of his brother John, his constant friend in boyhood, who married Alice Allerton, Emily's sister, when she was not more than eighteen years old; how he took her to India, and fell at the head of his company in a bloody skirmish, leaving his young wife to give birth to a child and die, far away from England and her sister. He reflected how for years Emily had been to him all she could have been had he been her brother; how cheerfully she had undergone the privations of poverty and performed the tedious offices of attendant on her afflicted father; how beautifully she filled the place of mother to his nephew, how unceasingly her powers

of exertion and endurance were tried. Something of wonder broke upon him that she, so gentle and so brave, so graceful and so strong, with so much to distress and so little to encourage her, was not more constantly an object of his anxiety and admiration.

"At one time," pondered Hugh to himself, "I thought Everitt would fall in love with her; but perhaps his seeing so much of her, and being so familiar with her excellences, prevented his becoming a worshiper. Anyhow, there is no hope of that now. 'Tis a desperate game he is playing. Without a doubt, the devil has led him into temptation; for, if there is one thing more calculated than another to demoralize a young man of a superior nature, it is for him to fall in love with a vain woman of the world who is above him in social position. Such an ambition stimulates the mean, but only degrades the noble. I'll put that sentiment down in my note-book for the advancement of belles-lettres."

Emily was very glad to see him when he surprised her by appearing in the middle of a reading lesson she was giving to Arthur.

"My dear brother Hugh, what a sunshine you are!" she exclaimed, making the most of her relationship to her visitor. "Mr. Harvey has just gone into papa's room, and will chat with him for an hour, so your very obedient Emily Allerton can conscientiously enjoy your society for a while. Arthur, my magnificent, put away your books, and tell your uncle he has no business to bring so pale a face up to Regent's Park."

Her cheerfulness did not seem forced, but Hugh detected an unusual delicacy in her complexion, and saw that she was thinner than she had been weeks before.

"Never mind my pale face. How do *you* come to be so out of condition?"

"I won't deny the charge, for I am at the end of next week going to be put *into condition*. Mr. Harvey is going to take us all down to Slaughton Hill for a month. Arthur

will have his pony; papa delights in the prospect, and Kate Nugent is to be our hostess. You must come down, and watch me as I advance *into condition*."

"Such language to use to Emily!" observed Master Arthur, indignantly. "Out of condition indeed! That's what Mr. Harvey said my pony was, when he ordered Mr. Ring to give it more corn."

Hugh had plenty of materials, both in occurrences and powers of description, wherewith to make his call an enlivening change to Emily. He had seen some pictures lately by artists she especially admired; he had literary gossip to impart, and he found it was incumbent on himself to enter into the details of some new scribbling engagements he had made with proprietors of magazines. In answer to Emily's inquiry whether he had been very gay lately, he gave running accounts of the different parties he had been to, and among them Mrs. Dalmaine's proceedings figured. But, strange to say, Hugh did not mention even the name of Mrs. Harrie Dillingborough.

"Mr. Brookbank knows Mrs. Dalmaine. Was he there?" Emily inquired after a pause, during which Arthur had left the room.

"Surely he was, and in great force. Some one who did not know him told me his appearance was that of a distinguished young man," Hugh replied, with a laugh.

"He has not been here for a month or five weeks," observed Emily, with a brightened color, which Hugh did not observe, for he was looking out of the window.

"He is very fully occupied just now."

"In legal pursuits?"

"I'm not aware they are illegal."

"Don't tease one with miserable puns. What is he doing?"

"He is in love."

"How grave you have become! Is the subject such an

awful one? At worst, the malady is not uncommon," replied Emily, merrily.

"'Tis no jesting matter. Death is common, but not ludicrous on that account," rejoined Hugh, responding to Emily's banter with a droll assumption of solemnity.

"Who is the lady?"

"Miss Julia Leatheby."

"Is she beautiful?"

"Yes."

"Of good family?"

"Yes."

"Is she an heiress?"

"Of course. Everitt would not think of making matrimonial overtures to a poor woman. He is a philosopher, and admires Aristotle, who, with an especial view to London fortune-hunters, remarks, 'Wherefore it is matter of necessity, in a polity of this kind, for opulence to be respected, more especially where they are governed by women, as is the case with the greater number of these fierce and warlike nations beyond the Celts.'"

"Is she clever?"

"About the most talented and accomplished girl I know."

"Then what is there to desire?"

"Honestly, Emily, I have no right to say that Miss Leatheby lacks any thing we should wish for in Hugh's wife; but I am instinctively repelled by her, and I find myself, unjustly perhaps, accusing her of being a heartless coquet."

"Has Mr. Brookbank had good opportunities of ascertaining her character?"

"Literally, none. She is much admired in society, as she would be even if she had not four or five thousand a year, and, having taken it into her head to approve Everitt, she manages to have him follow in her train wherever she goes; but in private he never sees her, for the simple reason that she is one of those girls who are never in private when a sec-

ond person is present. He is frantically in love, but it is altogether with a creature of his imagination. To a man of his temperament, beauty is language, and he interprets it by a key taken from the poetry and purity of his own mind."

While saying this, Hugh was gazing into the fire, with his face turned from Emily, who was sitting at the table playing with a folio of water-color sketches; but as he concluded the sentence he raised his eyes to her, and they saw what caused him to rise hastily, put a supporting arm round her waist, and, with his disengaged hand, raise a glass of water to her lips. She was deadly white, and had almost fainted.

Recovering herself with an effort of agony, she rose to her feet before two minutes had elapsed, and, advancing to the door, said, with quiet firmness, "Thank you, Hugh. I require no more help now. Keep here for five minutes; at the end of that time I will return, if able to do so. If you should not see me again at the end of that time, leave the house without making any observations about me."

She quitted the room, but before the expiration of the fifth minute, reappeared, pale and sad, but calm and restored.

"Hugh," she said, softly, "you have discovered my secret; it is safe with you—safe as if it had been whispered into a mother's ear. You won't think the worse of me—you know my life since I was a little child—you can make great allowance for me, and you have suffered as I do now. God bless him, and protect him from grief! God bless you too, Hugh, for you have always been a dear brother to me. Come and see me as often as you can; but you must never allude to this subject to me any more than you may breathe a hint of it to living persons; still, it shall be another tie of affection between us besides those which are sanctified by the grave. Perhaps this has come to me as a punishment for, in weak moments, repining at my life of duties, and longing to be relieved from it and taken to one of pleasures. Go, now, Hugh, and don't let the remembrance of this interview depress you."

Trembling, Hugh took her proffered hand, and pressed it to his lips. Tears fell from him as he did so; but in Emily's blue eyes there was no sign of dejection, and her slight hand was firm.

A quarter of an hour after Hugh had departed, little Arthur re-entered the drawing-room, and found his aunt sitting at the window in sorrowful composure. Taking up a position before the fire, he watched her in silence for several minutes, and then approaching her, and twining an arm round her neck, petitioned, "Emily, dear, let us go out in the park now for a walk. The sun is shining, and if we cloak up well, it won't be too cold for you. Do, please."

"You forget, Arthur, you are going to ride."

"I don't wish to ride," responded Arthur.

"Give me a reason for this whim, and then I'll gratify you."

Arthur eyed her wistfully, and after a little consideration, replied, "You see, Emily, you don't look happy and like yourself. And when you are so, you always get more cheerful directly you begin to do something for somebody. So I want you to take me out for a walk."

"You're a good child, my magnificent," replied Emily, patting his head. "You are always near to remind your aunt of her duty when she forgets it."

Ere long she was fulfilling her promise to Arthur by trotting with him backward and forward in the private garden of the park, by the side of the ornamental water. The wind, that whistled round her, and beat against her fur wraps, was cold, but the sun did his best to warm it; and, in like manner, Emily's heart was discomforted, but her courage did its best to cheer it.

That night, after Mr. Allerton's tea had disappeared, after the long, wearisome games of backgammon had come to an end, after the poor old man, feeble, irritable, and insane, had been conveyed to his bed and was asleep, Emily knelt at the

window of her room, and, looking out on the park lying in the cold moonlight, meditated on the past, and turned her gaze, now clear, now dim and wandering, to the future. She thought of all the good and inspired men who from the creation of the earth had, each in his own age, labored for others, careless of themselves, regardless of suffering, not anxious for fame, not even wanting their print on the sands of time to be a mark to human eyes of human step, but preferring that their labor should bear the fruit of a nameless addition, to be perceived only by the unseen, to the happiness and goodness of man. Had she, too, not duties to perform, the faithful discharge of which would be an acceptable service of praise and thanks to God? Had she not Arthur to love, and protect, and instruct? Had she not soil, ample and rich, wherein to plant her little mustard-seed, that might, even when she was no more, flourish a noble tree, and harbor the birds of heaven?

CHAPTER X.

KATE NUGENT.

After Hugh Falcon left Quolibet Street, Mr. Hassell saw about a dozen patients, one after another in succession, and having put down two of them in the gratuitous list Dr. and Mrs. Bannick were so severe upon, hurried off to his hospital, where for three hours he occupied himself with downright toil, requiring nerve and muscular strength as well as skill, which no prosperous and hard-worked man in London, not a surgeon, would dream of undergoing without handsome payment. It was past three o'clock in the afternoon when, his duties of charity in the wards accomplished, he jumped into his brougham and ordered the driver to convey him briskly to Whitechapel Church.

"Let's see—most of these people can wait till to-morrow

or the next day," he observed to himself during the transit, as he passed his eye over a list of the patients then under his attendance. "There's Colonel Gandy to take nothing but arrow-root and barley-water till he sees me—then I'd certainly better not call on him. Lady Alice Marlow was at two balls last night, the paper says, and is to be at Hinden House to-night, so she'll be quite well till to-morrow. Sloper, Hilversley, Brown, Smithies, Tomkins—they don't want me. I really do not see any necessity for returning to town to-night. It would be nice to have the evening for a holiday. Perhaps I could induce Miss Nugent to spend an hour with Polly and Polly's brother. No, I can't do that, though; I must see poor Mrs. Crofton, of Bayswater; for, as she does not pay me, she must not have reason to deem me careless."

Springing to the ground immediately his carriage stopped at Whitechapel Church, he told his servant to await his return there, and, quicker than his words were uttered, crossed the road, and turned down an obscure street. Ten minutes' rapid walking brought him into as horrible and impure a spot of foul drains, destitution, and violence as can be found even in that delightful quarter. The alleys, that crossed and thridded each other like net-work, were alive with cadaverous, and tattered, and bespattered objects, bearing a faint resemblance to men, women, and children, who sidled, and slipped, and shambled about, parleying with each other in snarls and shrieks. Having worked through the worst portions of this revolting region, Mr. Hassell came upon a comparatively decent collection of yards, which, though full of the evidences of poverty, were not without occasional tokens of healthy sentiment. Here and there pots of flowers were to be observed slowly dying in windows, or blackbirds in cages nailed above garret casements cheeped out dolefully their reminiscences of, or aspirations for, the country; children were not so universally sprawling in the black gutters, but were nursed and cared for, instead of being struck and spurned by

their mothers; dog-torture and kitten-driving were less popular amusements; and the adult portion of the community seemed to entertain juster notions of the dignity of labor; for there were more of them occupied in shoemaking and tinkering than in idling about, staring listlessly at each other, and chatting fiercely about nothing.

"Am I far from Cowley Rents?" inquired Mr. Hassell of an old man.

"Turn to your left and you'll see the church. Cowley Rents is behind it," was the answer.

Following the direction, George Hassell soon found himself in Cowley Rents (a long, dismal, musty passage), and entering the open door of No. 87.

"Does Madge Gardiner live here?" he inquired of a stout woman sitting on the stairs of the end of the contracted vestibule.

"What do you want on her?"

"I am a doctor," replied Mr. Hassell, avoiding the question.

"All right, doctor," rejoined the woman, rising briskly. "Madge is my lodger, and a decent woman she is, too. She has been awaiting for you all the day; I didn't believe you'd come—you have, though. But as to your doing any thing for the child's eye—it's all mine." And, so saying, this singular portress winked derisively.

"But I can see her?"

"Certainly; and very good it is of you to come, doctor. Straight up till you can't go no furder, and then knock; that'll bring her, I'll be bound."

Having climbed the dark and cramped staircase, Mr. Hassell found himself unable to advance except through a door, which was opened, before he applied his hand to it, by a thin, delicate woman, not more than five-and-forty years old, but, from the influence of bodily suffering and poverty, having the appearance of being over fifty.

"You are Madge Gardiner?" inquired Mr. Hassell.

"The same, sir."

"Your little girl has the misfortune to be blind."

"It has so pleased the Almighty, sir."

"I'm a doctor. A friend of mine has sent me to look at her."

"I'm truly grateful."

The attic was so low that, in the highest part of it, Mr. Hassell was scarcely able to stand upright, but it was very clean; the floor was clean, the meagre furniture was clean, the quilt on the truckle-bed was almost white, the ceiling had clearly been recently whitewashed by an inexpert hand, the striped calico curtains of the window were free from stain or taint of dirt, no dust rested on the ledges, and the handles of the poker and shovel were bright with being burnished. Even adornment had been attempted, for on one wall appeared, in narrow black frames, two pictures of sacred subjects.

"I'm truly grateful, sir, to the gentleman who mentioned me to you—and to you likewise for coming," said the woman, with a movement of deference. "Would you oblige me by taking a seat?"

As she spoke she threw an apron over the only chair her apartment contained. Mr. Hassell accepted the throne thus prepared for him, and, when the woman brought Nancy to him, he took the little creature in his arms.

"I must have a better light," he observed, moving toward the window with Nancy in his embrace.

For a short time he made a careful investigation into the state of the child's eyes, and then, the examination being concluded, said, "There's no reason why all this should not be set right. How do you like that news?"

"'Tis too good," said Mrs. Gardiner, her eyes sparkling.

"And now, Mrs. Gardiner—" recommenced the surgeon, after a pause.

The woman started.

"What is the matter? I don't frighten you?"

"Excuse me, sir, excuse me. I have been so long called Madge."

"You don't object to my addressing you as Mistress?"

"You're too good," she answered with difficulty, the kindness with which she was treated overcoming her.

"Come, come, don't break down. I can't stop many minutes with you, and yet we must say a good deal to each other. The gentleman who spoke with you last night is a very intimate and dear friend of mine; he has told me all he knows of your past troubles and difficulties, and that is as much, I suppose, as I need know at present; the only remark on it I'll make is to assure you I'm very sorry for it all, and to hint that I feel sure brighter days are in store for you."

There was an indescribable healthiness of simplicity in the tone and manner with which he said these few words.

"Now, the best plan I can think of for Nancy is for me to take her while she is under treatment into my hospital, where you'll be able to see her every day, and there to do my best for her."

"Will there be any danger, sir?"

"None. The worst that can happen from what I shall do will be that she won't be benefited by it. And the pain will be only a trifle."

"I'm obliged, sir."

"When we have done our best to give her sight, we shall have to think about her education. One of my friends is a lady, the best and most pious woman the whole world has, who spends her life in doing works of goodness, and has, among other institutions, a large school for poor children under her control. I purpose asking this lady to come to our assistance—either to take Nancy into her own school, or, in case she does not obtain her sight, to procure her admission into an establishment for teaching blind children trades. Does this meet your views?"

"Don't ask me, sir. 'Tis what I've always dreamed on."

"And, now, one word about yourself."

"Not about myself, if you will have the goodness, sir, do not. Enough has been done for me now—all that I have ever prayed for. I've got gratitude enough in me to be rightly grateful for this great benevolence; but you mayn't overdo me with mercies."

"But you would not refuse to be removed from the hard life you at present lead. If we could place you beyond the reach of cruel necessity—"

"I wouldn't wish you to do so—I wouldn't indeed, so don't tempt me. You couldn't easily find me employment, sir, that I with my lamed hand could do, and I shouldn't like to be a weight on any one, least of all on those who were holping Nancy. The rich have many calls on 'em—more than they can answer to, and I shouldn't like, while living easy myself, to feel that I was sucking up to myself all the charity that might go to comfort and support a dozen. There are plenty that require aid more than I; for, though I amn't strong, no one can call me weakly; and by my present labors, which are honest, though lowly, I can keep myself a-going."

"Well, well," Mr. Hassell rejoined, smiling, "we'll talk of this again. Anyhow, you will know where to look for friends."

"If I might be assured o' that, it wod be better than money—it wod be dearer than untold gold. If I could know that you, sir, would learn to consider of me not so much as an unfortunate wretch, little removed from a beggar, whom you had given comfort and good deeds to, but more as a woman whom you had reason to feel warmly to—I am not so bold as to say more—as you would feel to one striving to be right in a more favorable worldly position than my low one, it would make my life better, my heart more cheerful, and my mind more Christian. Only, sir, don't press more gifts upon me. You're very generous, but you can't give me love and money both—leastwise I can not receive 'em."

This strange entreaty (startling even to George Hassell, who was familiar with the poor, and understood the meaning of "having seen better days," as used in "a low district") was made in a mild, weak voice, and in a deferential and grateful manner, but with that firmness and conciliating courage which are the ensigns of true nobility wherever they are found.

"You shall have both, whenever you like to accept them —my love and good-will you *must* always have. Dry your eyes, sister, dry your eyes, or you'll bring the water into mine also, and that you'd be sorry for. What say you? will you call with Nancy at my house to-morrow, any time between nine and twelve in the morning? Can you manage this?"

"If you will let me know where it is?"

Mr. Hassell gave his address, and with a few more kindly sentences took his leave.

"He's another of 'em!—he's a 'ospital surgeon—God bless him!" said Madge Gardiner, when his retreating steps could be no longer heard by her.

"To Slaughton—as fast as you can," was George Hassell's brief order on again stepping into his brougham.

The mandate was obeyed to the letter, if "as fast as you can" meant "drive at twelve miles an hour;" for George's servant was longing for certain comforts his master's larder contained, and George's brougham was as light as a cockle-shell, and the horse that drew it was a fierce, high-blooded creature, bursting with muscle, and seventeen hands high.

Slaughton, as many country men, and perchance a few Londoners, may not know, is a village on the banks of the Thames, just fairly out of the smoke of London, and in the green fields. "Slaughton Hill," an elegant mansion standing in a small but well-wooded park, overlooking the village, and on a clear day exchanging glances with the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, is the property of Abraham Harvey, the

well-known capitalist and manufacturer, whose extensive factories occupy a considerable portion of the parish adjoining Slaughton, and lying just within the embrace of one of the gigantic hands of the metropolis.

Londoners have a belief that Slaughton air is very salubrious, and to accommodate their wishes to have their families benefited by the bracing atmosphere, houses have been built, and added to, and multiplied during the last ten or twenty years with great spirit, so that away from Slaughton village, farther into the country and on the other side of Slaughton hill, there has sprung up quite a town of spacious residences for the wealthier of middle-class citizens.

In a goodly house in the village—a large, antique, gabled building, with leafy vines and ivy covering its walls, and standing in the centre of a well-kept garden, George Hassell kept his house, wherein dwelt his sister, an amiable woman, and the two little girls his wife had given him before she was removed to a better world. When the fierce horse sprung up the drive with animated bounds, just to show that a six miles' spirt was a mere trifle, and stopped short at the front door, a cry of delight came from the interior, which was no bad welcome to the surgeon's heart.

It was dark, the night having completely closed in, so George did not look at the straggling vine-stalks to lament that they were not in leaf, or at the garden to mourn that it was not full of flowers, but with one of his wide leaps sprung from his carriage-step into the hall, and in another second had his two children in his arms—their flaxen ringlets blinding his eyes, their pink lips covering his face with kisses, and their blue eyes and merry voices laughing out their amusement because he was unable to pay back the salutes as fast as they gave them.

The business of dinner was commenced as soon as the cook could bring it up from the kitchen.

"I have had to make a rapid push to get down to you," *observed George* when the soup was dismissed.

"I trust you have not inconvenienced yourself," answered sister Polly. "We shall have a nice long evening; give me a knight, and I'll challenge you to chess."

"I can't stop."

"What? going back to London to-night?"

"By the half past eight o'clock train. It may seem absurd to you that I have come so far to stop only little more than an hour, but I knew you would keep dinner waiting for me, and I did not like to disappoint you."

Sister Polly smiled.

"You're very considerate, George. Disappointment is a cruel thing to bear."

"My arrangements to-day were altogether put out by the advent of an urgent case that occupied me a considerable time."

"Have you a patient to visit in the village before you return to town?" inquired sister Polly, the expression of her face becoming more wickedly mischievous every moment.

George was silent, looked at his sister, tried to be dignified, strove not to be humble, broke down, and joined in the merry peal of laughter that issued from Polly's lips.

Whether Polly was silent out of compassion for her brother's state of mind, or only from a kindly wish that he should enjoy his dinner in peace, unbroken by banter, it would be difficult to decide; anyhow, she refrained from speaking till the conclusion of the repast, except when she gave utterance to some decidedly commonplace observation.

"Here is a bumper of port for my considerate brother, who drives six miles to spend one half hour with me. He won't stay this evening ten minutes longer than he is obliged, I see, so I'll reward him at once," remarked the sister, demurely, when the dessert had been arranged on the table.

"Have you seen her to-day?"

"I was in the school for two hours, and she came in for a very little while; but we exchanged a few words."

"Did she inquire after me?"

"Your self-complacence need not be disturbed. She did."

George looked triumphant.

"Don't exult," continued the sister; "she could not do less, when speaking to your sister."

"What did you talk about?"

"She asked me to lend her the book you brought me home yesterday. Of course I promised to send it by the first messenger I could spare."

"That's well," exclaimed George, a gleam of satisfaction running from his eyes.

"So, immediately I reached home, I dispatched Robert with it to Elm Cottage."

"Psha! you were not such a noodle?"

Polly turned away without answering.

"How a noodle?" she asked, after a minute's pause, coming back from a side table with a book in her hand. "You shall have it if you'll say 'please,' and promise not to sleep in Quolibet Street for an entire fortnight, beginning from to-morrow."

"'Please'—I promise. Now give me the book."

"And now, noodle," said Polly, with bitter emphasis, "I'll be strong-minded enough to assist in packing you up in your great-coat."

"You'd like her for a sister?"

"Have you my book in your hand to carry to her? You know, George, I think her an angel."

Polly attended her brother across the hall, opened the door for him, saw him descend the steps into the dark garden, closed the door with an effort against the wind, retraced her steps to the dining-room, and sank into an easy-chair by the fire.

"Poor George! poor George!" she communed with herself, "Kate will never have him! She appreciates him thoroughly, admires him, loves him, but she will never marry

him. I can read the determination in her calm, thoughtful face. Oh, that it could be otherwise! How good she is! Too good for any one but him!"

Down through the village George Hassell took his way, till he came to the foot of the hill where, on one side of the way, stands Elm Cottage, and on the other side is the entrance to Slaughton Hill Park.

"There's no rain, and the weather is not inclement. She will, without doubt, be at the evening service. Anyhow, I'll step down to St. Stephen's—'tis only a hundred yards."

So saying, he crossed the road, proceeded a few paces down a by-way, and entered the church-yard of St. Stephen's, a chapel Mr. Harvey, of Slaughton Hill, had built at his own cost for the convenience of the village, and more especially for the use of his workmen in the adjacent suburb of London and his other operatives in the city, whom he used to encourage to spend their fine Sundays in the green fields adjoining Slaughton. In another minute George Hassell was one of a rather numerous congregation, mostly from the working classes, in the interior of the sacred building. The evening service was read by a clergyman with a soft and musical, and, at the same time, earnest voice; and portions of the Psalms and the evening Hymn were sung with pathetic power by the entire assembly, the voices of the mass being led by a detachment of school children, and the music of them all being controlled by a well-toned organ. The chapel was remarkable for a few of the more simple and unobtrusive of those mediæval decorations which have at times excited so much religious animosity in the minds of those who place too much stress on trifles, and who deem that our spiritual enemy has the good taste to prefer a richly-carved oak bench to a rudely-constructed deal form, fresh from the carpenter's plane, or from a pot of white paint.

As the congregation dispersed, a lady, dressed in black, with a veil brought forward though not drawn over her face,

and attended by a female servant, passed down the aisle, now and then stopping to look a kindly greeting to her poorer acquaintance. When her eye fell on George Hassell, standing near the door and evidently waiting her approach, a slight flush of surprise, of pleasure, and of trouble crossed her pale face.

"Mary hoped to have a long evening with you at chess, she told me this morning," the lady said when they were out of the church.

"She has to be disappointed, for I must catch the next up-train. I have in my hand a book she desired me to give you. Shall I intrust it here to Esther? But she has enough to do with her lantern; so allow me to accompany you to your door, and leave it there."

"Thank you. Have you been hard at work to-day?"

"Pretty well. You, I suppose, also have not been idle. But to-morrow will be your great day of exertion. Could I be of any service to you?"

"No, no," was the answer, accompanied with a laugh that in the dark declared the face it came from to wear a humorous expression. "You can employ your time better than in making yourself useful to a clothing club."

"Not more agreeably, though."

"Another such speech, and you shall pay a fine in a double subscription to the Clothing Fund."

"I have, I think, this morning found occasion for your services in aid of a friend of mine, who has a charitable undertaking in hand. I can not speak more fully on the subject, for time would not permit me, and I must, before communicating particulars to you, obtain my friend's permission to do so."

"You know it will give me great pleasure to be of any assistance to you. I do not need to assure you of that. When will you admit me into your confidence?"

"May Polly and I spend an hour with you to-morrow evening?"

"Certainly. Esther, you must provide extra cups of tea."

"Yes, ma'am," returned the maid.

"There's the bell!" exclaimed Miss Nugent. "You must run to catch the train."

George signified his assent by giving the book into Esther's hands and running off, putting an end to this interesting interview in the dark by a cordial but hasty "farewell."

CHAPTER XI.

SLAUGHTON HILL.

ABRAHAM HARVEY, ESQ., M.P., was a man (and at this outset of the chapter the reader may be informed he may use the present instead of the past tense in all that relates to Mr. Harvey's character, for such as he was eight or ten years since, such, thank God! he is now) whom the world spoke of in divers strains. By some he was esteemed excellent, by some as very trumpery; there was a party who contemned him for a mean and stingy spirit, and an opposition who lauded him for generosity and courage.

Born in a work-house, educated in early childhood at a charity school, made over at the tender age of twelve years as a parish 'prentice to a drunken fishmonger, he, without doubt, saw in his legal infancy a rough side of life. But he managed to rise—neither by fawning on his superiors, nor by plundering the weaker than himself, nor by selling his soul nor mortgaging it in any way to the powers of evil, but by being stronger in body, stronger in mind, stronger in purpose, and stronger in goodness than the generality of men, whether born in work-houses or elsewhere. Those ingenious writers are not rare in our literature who boldly declare, or dexterously insinuate, that "lowly people" never advance themselves to eminence unless they are the creatures of "low" ambition, thirsting for wealth, careless of, or even delighting

in all human misery not immediately affecting themselves, and animated by a ferocious vulpine hate for "the bloated haristocracy." To these teachers and their followers it must either be incredible, or very painful, that Abraham Harvey, almost literally picked out of a gutter, became, through honorable exertion, a capitalist ere he was forty years old, and a member of the House of Commons ere he was fifty.

In the city he was very popular; men liked dealing with him, for they were secure of not being overreached, and felt that his nod was more to be relied on than most other persons' deliberate assurances; charity dinners sought him out more perseveringly even than they did the old Duke of Cambridge; decayed clerks, whose characters were decent, used by strange luck to be continually meeting him; and wealthy merchants respected his manly virtues almost as much as they did his money.

In Westminster the case was very different. Noble lords and honorable members were continually sneering at him, and attacking him in those polite terms in which very well-bred men at times envelop very vulgar sentiments. Coming from the people—"the very *dregs* of society," as young Conservative members were fond of repeating, with a bitter emphasis on "dregs"—Abraham Harvey was such an audacious scoundrel as to remember the fact, and positively not to be ashamed of it. Sent into Parliament by a constituency of working men, he was so purblind as to deem it his duty to call the attention of his brother legislators to the condition and interests of the people. A man of business, accustomed to the management of pecuniary transactions, and in early life to very small ones, and having been taught by experience the effects of poverty on the poor, he felt that the raising taxes so as not to depress the poor, and the spending public money so as to buy the greatest possible amount of happiness with it for the nation at large, were subjects not to be treated lightly. To distributing annual pay to gentlemen who

did nothing for the state, as a reward for their never having done any thing for themselves, he had decided objections.

He was laughed at for wasting his valuable intellects in trying to save a few ignominious halfpence to each laborer in England; and instead of being silenced, he rejoined that a few halfpence were no mean trifles to a laborer—sometimes even saving him from crimes, sometimes helping him on his way to heaven.

Now all this made Abraham Harvey, M.P., very obnoxious to a certain set in St. Stephen's.

"Confound the man! he's always interfering with what doesn't concern him. What should he know about sinecures? he never possessed one," said my lord on the treasury bench to his conscience.

"Such a low dog, always talking about the people and the dregs he came from," whispered Leonard Millicent, Esq., M. P., with a sinecure, as well as a good fortune his father made for him in trade.

"It is what we get from that blessed Reform Bill *of ours*, Millicent," replied Edward Cornbury, who at the passing of the Reform Bill had not received his first whipping at Eton.

"Every thing mean that fellow has a passion for," continued Leonard, in a whisper; "all poor devils who can't help themselves, all weak wretches who've been knocked down and can't get up, he is everlastingly running to protect."

"'Tis so; but how the deuce should you expect any thing like chivalry out of a fellow born in a work-house?"

Poor Abraham was roughly handled, being not only poohpoohed and coughed down in the House, but reviled out of it. Those journals that upheld the everlasting principle that the upper crust is not made of the same flour as the under crust, and laughed at the "rights of the people" and the "majesty of mud," were very violent on his principles, paying, as they did, so much respect to "the people," to which body, of course,

the writers in the said journals did not belong, and so little respect to our hereditary noblesse, of which order, as a matter of course, the said writers were members.

The war waxed fiercer as "the low fellow" waxed stronger, and soon every personal peculiarity of "the upstart" was made a mark for ridicule to aim at. Occasionally, when he grew excited in debate, he dropped his h's; this very rarely happened, but often enough to justify the assertion that, if Mr. Harvey's word could be trusted (which, of course, it could not), he had never in his life addressed the House of Commons.

His features were not what is called classical or *aristocratic* (for, as is well known, the English aristocracy have one uniform cast of countenance); but he had a broad and embrowned face, which, of course, no gentleman ever has; and he had a snub nose, a misfortune never bestowed on any but low fellows; so caricatures of him in lithograph were sent through the country, rendering emphatic these points in his appearance. If he uttered (as he frequently did) a sentence of eulogy on the patriotism and virtues of the upper classes of England, the journals were smart on his being at last ashamed of the work-house, and being anxious to wear plush in a palace. When he alluded (as he did once, and only once) to the hardships and sufferings of his opening manhood, it was remarked that he never let an opportunity slip him of obtruding his sores and degradation before the world, with the whining cant of a professional beggar.

£ *s. d.* was the only subject he could get up any enthusiasm for. He was a grinding tyrant, extracting an enormous income from the toil of the multitude—an income he had not the courage to spend, even penuriously. He would buy every thing as he would a beefsteak, at its market worth; if asked to choose between Christianity and Mohammedanism as a religion for the state, he would learn which could be supplied at the smaller price, and decide in favor of the cheaper! *So said the papers.*

Mr. Harvey's life at Slaughton Hill was passed in strict seclusion, broken only by visits from a few very intimate friends, of whom George Hassell and his sister, Miss Nugent and the Allertons of Regent's Park, were the most valued. Between him and Miss Nugent there was some close tie—of that the Slaughton inhabitants were well aware—but whether the bond was one of relationship, or dependence, or simply of affection, they could not decide.

Miss Nugent's cottage, which stood on the merchant's estate, indeed in a corner of his modest park, was daily visited either by Mr. Harvey himself, or by a servant from Slaughton Hill, bearing a note, a message, a present of game or fruit, or a parcel of some kind. Elm Cottage had no stabling accommodation, so Miss Nugent's pony and phaeton were taken care of in Slaughton Hill establishment; and in rainy and inclement weather a close carriage from the same quarter was always at her service. The schools Mr. Harvey had established were under her control; the hospital he had founded was under her supervision; the chapel of St. Stephen, which we have already entered, though erected at his expense, was built after her designs. For years this intimate relation had existed between the lady and the owner of Slaughton Hill, so that in the neighborhood it was understood that, for all charitable purposes, Miss Nugent was the real possessor of her friend's wealth.

Of Miss Nugent's private history the curious of her neighbors had only very scanty materials. From her appearance, and from the fact that she had resided nearly twenty years by herself in Elm Cottage, they knew she must be over forty years of age. When she first entered that habitation, in the second year of Mr. Harvey's residence at Slaughton Hill, she was young, very pale and emaciated, as if from recent and severe illness, was always dressed in black, and wore a slight white cap—not a widow's cap, but something like one—which proclaimed that its wearer, though young, wish-

ed those who came in contact with her not to bestow those peculiar attentions on her which are shown to youth and beauty. Immediately she commenced the life of a sister of charity, visiting the poor, instructing in schools, and ministering to the sick; and from that time, without relaxation of energy, she had persevered in this course of self-elected duty, every succeeding year increasing the scale of her benevolent operations, and manifesting that she was more than ever devoted to her pious career.

Twenty years of this life had made little difference in her aspect or her character. Her face was still pale and pensive; her form was still slight and fragile, little betokening the strength and powers of physical endurance she possessed; and her dark eyes were still fascinating with an expression given them by sorrow, the memory of which could never be effaced. Time had mingled a few threads of white with her brown hair, and with them had given her something more of serenity and elasticity of mind; but otherwise she was the same, even to her dark dress and plain white cap.

Thus much, and little more, did the Slaughton gossips know about her. Beholding the vague outline of her charitable labors, they believed her to be a sincerely good woman; her manners they allowed to be gentle and conciliating, and it was clear, even to those who only casually conversed with her, that she was highly educated and conversant with the world, as well as refined in tastes and devout in aspirations; but they were annoyed they could not learn more of her—whose child she was, where she had dwelt, and what done as a girl. And perhaps they were slightly piqued in her maintaining so strict a domestic privacy, admitting no one to her abode but Mr. Harvey, George and Mary Hassell, the clergyman of St. Stephens's, Emily Allerton, and two or three other especial friends. A few there were whose vexation was compelled to find vent in anxious doubts as to her orthodoxy. "A very good woman she is, and has done great

things for the poor, without ostentation, and I must own that in the observance of her religious duties she is very unobtrusive of her own peculiar views, but—" and here Mrs. Pendle would pause, fold her hands, and look doubtfully at Dr. Pendle, the principal medical practitioner of the village. "Sadly narrow-minded, my dear—sadly narrow-minded!" the doctor would respond; "she runs a good chance of going over." "A good chance of going over! why, she is half way over already," Mrs. Pendle would observe, shaking her head gloomily at the prospect of the demi-going-over in question being converted into a whole one.

The demands which his commercial engagements and his political duties made on his attention secured Mr. Harvey from requiring the pleasures of society for the purpose of driving away ennui. Every morning saw him in his factories and in the city, and every evening when the House sat saw him in his place in the Commons. His business friends he entertained at his clubs, and his political friendships he cultivated in Pall Mall and Westminster; it was rare that any guests, with the exception of the Hassells, Emily Allerton, and Miss Nugent, and their especial adherents, were invited to Slaughton Hill.

The seclusion of that spot Mr. Harvey guarded with strict jealousy; and a delightful place, worthy in every respect of his care, that spot was. The park descended, from the table on which the mansion was placed, in graceful undulations to the Thames; the trees were numerous, well-grown, and of the best timber; the conservatory, ample and magnificent enough to stand by the side of a ducal palace, was stocked with an abundance of the rarest flowers and shrubs, which were collected from all the quarters of the earth, and were nursed by the best gardeners money and praise could procure; the grounds devoted to horticulture were laid out with exquisite taste, and contained almost as many fountains as parterres; the few horses the stables contained were

of pure breed, and remarkable for beauty; and the house itself, not at all too large for the country box of a bachelor of Mr. Harvey's wealth, was appointed with an equal regard to elegance and comfort, and contained, in painting, statuary, and china, a collection interesting to artists. Once every year, for a month in the autumn, Slaughton Hill was alive with staying guests—Emily Allerton and her father, Miss Nugent, George Hassell and his sister, and occasionally Hugh Falcon and Everitt Brookbank, forming a circle round the benevolent proprietor; and it was rare that a week passed in which those of the above who dwelt in the village did not come up to Slaughton Hill for an evening of music and conversation; but, with these exceptions, Mr. Harvey's retirement was unbroken, and he was left to the solitary enjoyment of his flowers, paintings, and music, to each of which he was passionately devoted. Certainly, at Slaughton Hill he seemed to have a taste and ideas beyond pounds, shillings, and pence.

It has already been shown, in more places than one, that Mr. Harvey was attentive in calling on poor Mr. Allerton in Regent's Park. Their acquaintance commenced when the former first entered the House of Commons, in which assembly the latter also had a seat. Their knowledge of each other was very slight (for they were opposed on every subject of politics and morals) till Mr. Allerton, on retiring, with fading intellects and broken fortunes, from public life, was induced to have recourse to the merchant for advice on his worldly affairs. At first, the latter was not inclined to enter into a discussion on the financial entanglements of his applicant, who had throughout life shown himself a heartless, vain, and unprincipled man of pleasure. But a visit which Mr. Harvey paid to the unfortunate man's home, the sight of Emily Allerton and her sister, then two beautiful children between thirteen and fifteen years old, and the discovery that they had no near relation to protect them, with

the exception of their unworthy father, wrought a change in the mind of the man of business, who had previously determined to let the miserable old scamp who asked his aid seek help elsewhere. From that time he occupied in reality the position of parent to the two girls.

"They are still at their exercise; I am afraid they'll walk too much; 'tis the third time that they have passed the windows, and it's at least a mile and a half from one gate to the other."

This was said by Miss Nugent to Emily Allerton as they sat, at the opening of spring (toward the conclusion of that month's visit Emily told Hugh she was about to make to Slaughton Hill, for the purpose of getting herself into condition), in one of the windows of a small drawing-room that commanded a view of the river, and the most picturesque portion of Mr. Harvey's demesne. The observation was directed toward the speaker's host and George Hassell, who, in the cold air and under a cloudy sky, were taking brisk walking exercise on the coach-road that crossed the park, at a time midway between the ordinary hours of luncheon and dinner.

"They are two fine men," said Miss Nugent. "Mr. Hassell is the younger and the handsomer, but Mr. Harvey has the advantage in respect of stature."

"They are two good men," responded Emily.

"Would that every one knew it as well as we!"

"The world, then, would only praise them; and *they* do not require the encouragement of commendation."

"I do not want them to be loaded with flattery and adulation; but it is cruel to me, cruel to Mr. Harvey, that he should be traduced with such malignant violence in the journals."

"Is he pained by such pitiful expressions of party rancor? Surely, if he sees them, they only amuse him."

"You are mistaken. He loves all men too much not to

be deeply moved by avowals of their hate to him. When he first entered political life—and he did so, as you know, at the urgent request of his present constituency—he used to show me the slanders in the newspapers with tears in his eyes; and once he said, 'Perhaps, when I'm dead, men will read this and believe it.'"

"But he has consolation in the gradual triumph of his own ridiculed opinions."

"Thank God, he has; but that is not enough."

"I wish he had a wife."

"I trust he may yet have one," replied Miss Nugent, raising her eyes and fixing them on Emily.

"Do you really think he will ever marry?" the latter inquired, with interest.

Miss Nugent sighed, paused for a few seconds, and then slowly answered, "I am afraid—never."

"Did he ever make you an offer, Kate?" Emily asked, simply; "I mean, years back."

A deadly paleness shot into Miss Nugent's face, that was, under ordinary circumstances, not remarkable for freshness of color. Emily chanced not to be looking at her, otherwise she would have seen that her words had struck home to the feelings of her friend.

"Earnestly I beg of you, Emily, to dismiss any such suspicions from your mind. How good, how noble, how generous, how considerate he has been to me for one half of my life, no tongue can tell! But never once has he betrayed a feeling that either was, or could become, the love you are thinking of. If you knew some passages of our early histories—*my* early history, I mean—you would not need this assurance that Mr. Harvey has never, for one instant, dreamed of making me his wife. . . . . I wish I had courage to tell you more—that it was right for me to be perfectly open with you. But a promise to him ties my tongue; and if that were removed, cowardice would keep me silent."

This speech was made with manifest suffering, and as she concluded the tears fell rapidly over the speaker's face.

It was a strange position that these four friends—the two men in the park and the two ladies in the drawing-room—occupied to each other. As George Hassell and his host strode up and down the coach-road, discussing with earnestness the propriety of Parliament allowing a new line of railway to be commenced, each had, in a retired corner of his consciousness, a picture of Miss Nugent and Emily Allerton, who, they knew, would make their six o'clock dinner an unusually pleasant one. George knew that he was deeply in love with Miss Nugent, and that he had made up his mind to conclude that, his fourth year of diffident homage, by an explicit declaration of his attachment; he knew, also, that his companion, notwithstanding the discrepancy of age, had conceived a passionate devotion for the girl he had protected from her childhood, and with whose excellences he was familiar. And knowing this, George pitied Abraham Harvey, for he saw that his hopes were destined to disappointment. Mr. Harvey, on the other hand, was equally familiar with and equally commiserated the state of George's affections, for he was well aware that, had George's advances to Miss Nugent been of a more decided character, and afforded an opportunity for their distinct refusal or acceptance, he would long previously have been convinced that his suit could never be successful. So it was in the park; in the drawing-room the case was somewhat otherwise. Emily was totally ignorant of the passion her good friend, Mr. Harvey, cherished for her; had she had the slightest suspicion of it, she, of course, would not have come for a month's visit to Slaughton Hill; but she had long discerned the especial regard Mr. Hassell bore to her friend, Kate Nugent, and had long felt assured that the moment of its avowal would immediately be followed by the commencement of deep and lasting sorrow to him. Lastly, Miss Nugent was intimate with the

condition of Mr. Harvey's heart, and was not less certain his love would be rejected than she was assured of its existence. Had she not for years studied his character—its fervor, its manly simplicity, its childlike freshness, and its incapability of pettiness? and could she be in error on such a point? In gratitude to him, and admiring love for him, was not the ever-present wish of her heart to procure for him that which would contribute to his enjoyment? Had she not done her utmost to inspire Emily with that ardent love for her careful guardian which should make her ready to give herself to him? And was not Miss Nugent conscious of having failed in her undertaking? Nay, had she not, while making her Jesuitical endeavors, acquired information full and complete that Emily loved another with the high warmth of her affectionate nature, which other could never be hers?

"I was not thinking of recent days," said Emily, after a pause, during which Miss Nugent's excitement had subsided; "I have never imagined there was any probability of your becoming his wife or *any other's*."

"I am very glad to hear you say so."

"At one time I used to wish it might be otherwise, and that your determination might be altered. Even till lately —till within the last very few weeks—I hoped that you might make happy a man so good—I had almost said so worthy of you—as Mr. Hassell; for, though we have never exchanged one word on such a subject till to-day, I long since discerned how he loved you, and I fancied—why I can not say—that Mr. Harvey wished that his suit might prosper."

A blush ran over Miss Nugent's face, for this was the first time that any one had addressed her on a subject that had occupied much of her thoughts, and caused her much uneasiness.

"I do not wish unsaid what you have just uttered,

though your remarks *do* pain me," she answered. "More than once I have thought of touching on the subject to you, for, of course, I was aware that your silence was not that of ignorance. I can not tell you how much perplexity and annoyance I have suffered for months and months—ay, years, trying to discover some way of showing him that his wishes can not be realized, and finding none. Mary Hassell knows well what I have in vain endeavored to teach him, but he will not believe from her lips that which she learned from me. So it must continue for a little time; his imagination and love for me must still blind him to the meaning of my reserved, cold, constrained manner to him; and at last, when he asks me to be his wife, he must suffer the pain that only the finest natures experience. Oh, that I could save him from it!"

"Do you not—can you not love him?" asked Emily, pleadingly.

Again the expression of deep grief, which Miss Nugent wore a few minutes previously, returned to her pale face; the dark eye flashed, as if with indignation at the inquiry; but the thin lips were pressed together to retain any irritable speech her heart might prompt her to make.

In a minute the gust of feeling had passed, and she answered softly, "Emily, my own dear Emily, do not search me; do not try to read all my heart: I would not have you see it. If you perceive in me that which does not appear reconcilable with the course I have taken in life, if you detect any sign of an affection that would, if indulged, lead me from the duties I have for long labored to perform, do not speculate on my weakness and inconsistency, but rather encourage me to persevere, and yet the more believe that that must be fittest for me to do which I do in spite of the opposition of selfish considerations."

"Dear Kate, you are very good," replied the lovely girl, putting her lips to those of her senior. "Do take me nearer to you, and let me know more of you, for indeed I require

your assistance and your sympathy. At times I am very unhappy."

"We all are."

"And my life seems blank and useless."

"No, no, it is one of duty; it can not, therefore, be fruitless."

"But it is of duty endured, not loved. I do not cheerfully acquiesce, but sullenly submit. My wretched selfish self is always before me."

"What do you find hard to bear?"

"Existence. It is very wicked, and I have striven with all my power to do better. I am steeped in discontent, and covered with dejection."

As she said this, her manner, even more than her words, spoke of heart sadness.

"Tell me more, Emily."

"This is quite new to me—at least in its present excess. Of course I knew that my lot was not a very enviable one, in a worldly sense; that I had to bear many troubles, and had several onerous tasks to perform. My father had to be nursed, and Arthur to be cared for—taught; I had to pass many days and weeks not only away from agreeable society, but also subjected to numerous vexations. But I need not repeat them to you, who can well imagine them."

"I know them, dear Emily; I have watched you, and admired the cheerfulness and womanly courage with which you exerted yourself."

"But still, at the best, I never was grateful to God that he had bestowed so many blessings on me, but rather found satisfaction in reflecting that I was so little depressed by, and so little discontented with, my lot. I was always looking forward to a time when I should be removed to a brighter and happier position in life, when I should have more to gratify and less to perplex me. More than once, when my poor father has required more unceasing attendance than

usual, I have regarded his demands as unreasonable, and have felt to him rather as if he was a petulant patient than a parent. A great deal of praise has been bestowed upon me undeservedly. My equable temper, good health, and hopeful disposition made my burden light; and light as it was, I was prone to look forward to the time when I should be freed from it. But now—"

"What would you have now?" Miss Nugent asked, laying her hand tenderly on Emily's.

"Not escape from my duties, but escape from selfish despondency; not relief from my external assailants and trials, but some protection from those that dwell and do their work within. You think me very wicked? repining fretfully on being so lightly afflicted?"

"Indeed I do not judge so. And your affliction is not light; it is not the less heavy for being made up for the most part of those petty griefs self-respect would not permit you to name; nor is your task the less easy because much of it consists of those humble offices which are great only in their irksomeness. You needed all your happiness of temperament, of bodily strength, and of hope; but of all these you have been robbed by a severe blow—bitter, though sent from heaven. Do you not remember the lines of the poor old poet?

> "'All these are mine, and heaven bestows
> The gifts, and yet I find them woes.'

If you have read my secret, so have I yours. Oh! my dear Emily, how could you fear I should judge you harshly? We are sisters in suffering—ought we not also to be sisters in charity?"

Much more these two gentle women said to each other, the matter and form of which can be easily supplied by any man whose heart has conversed with that of a pious mother, or who has spoken earnestly on sacred things to the sister of his childhood, or who has knelt in prayer with a good wom-

an. And on him who has done no one of these three things, may the just God have especial compassion!

The great front door of the house opens, steps and voices are heard in the hall; then the door of the drawing-room turns on its hinges, and Mr. Harvey and George Hassell enter the apartment, now dim in dusklight.

"Ah! you alone?" says George Hassell to Miss Nugent; "I thought Miss Allerton was with you."

"She left me the instant you entered the house by the opposite door. She has gone to Mr. Allerton's room to see if he is awake from his nap, and whether he will join us to-day at dinner."

Mr. Harvey retired into the hall, closing the door after him.

"Can you spare me five minutes?" George asked.

"Five times five, if you wish for so many," Miss Nugent replied, wondering why she trembled.

"It is about the blind child—blind no longer, thank God—that I wish to speak."

"Oh!" exclaimed the coward, thankful at the reprieve.

"On my offering to answer for your being a faithful keeper of a secret, my friend, no other than our mutual acquaintance, Hugh Falcon, commissioned me to tell you all."

CHAPTER XII.

HYDE PARK AND ELSEWHERE.

It was some months after the occurrence narrated in the latter part of the last chapter, and the days were fast becoming longer, and nigh the longest, and London was rapidly advancing to the height of the season, when Everitt Brookbank, mounted on an elegant and wicked gray hack, rode past Apsley House, and turned into Rotten Row. At first there were few equestrians to bear him company, and his horse had am-

ple room to plunge and flourish about in, indignant at the tight reins which held it within twenty yards of the entrance to the riding-ground. It was clear to the observer that Everitt had taken up his position either to await the advent of a friend, bent like himself on a canter, or to catch a nod of recognition from some carriage as it crossed from Piccadilly into the ring. However reasonable such conduct may appear to those who themselves like to take their gallops in company, or to receive smiles in public, from their partners of the previous night, to Everitt's steed it appeared a tyranny justifying rebellion; so, after fretting, and chafing, and foaming for a quarter of an hour, she (for the animal was a lady) alternately danced on her hind legs, and lashed out with them right and left, in a style that soon attracted attention.

"Stupid fool! since he has a horse, why does he not learn how to manage it?" growled Mr. Markton Grundlegrile from the footway. Grundlegrile could not ride, had no horse, had no friends—nor had he loveliness of any kind; but in fine weather he daily took walking exercise in the park, good-naturedly telling himself what he thought of every one else, and finding out that every well-mounted equestrian was either a tailor, or a coxcomb *showing himself off* on a hired horse.

"Take care of that *terrible creature*—do, dear Fanny," timid Gertrude implored of her cousin, taking, as she spoke, every precaution to steer her quiet pony out of the reach of danger.

"How I should like to have that dear gray for my own! What a shame it is of papa not to allow me a good horse!" answered Fanny Firebell, with a mad laugh, as her mettlesome bay, catching the contagion of riot, leaped forward.

"How long have you taken to riding that brute?" asked Lord Brigden, quietly, as he rode up from Constitution Hill, followed by a groom.

"You had better ask me how long I am going to ride her?" Everitt replied, coolly, modest in the confidence that it would be difficult to find the horse capable of unseating him.

"Come along with me—she'll be quiet, walking by the side of Bangor," said his lordship, patting the neck of his black charger, as the gray, humbled by finding herself in firm hands and exhausted by her violent outburst of feeling, gave signs of returning to a quiescent state.

"Thank you—I am waiting here for a friend."

"'Tis no use."

"How do you know?"

"Friends never come—at least, the one you are waiting for will not."

Everitt's color rose, but he had learned that anger was thrown away on the man who addressed him.

"I am not trifling with you. I saw Miss Leatheby half an hour since, and she told me she could not keep her appointment here."

"Her appointment?"

"Yes; it was arranged that I was to sit on Bangor, at this point, till her carriage passed, and then she was to bow to me, and I was to feel quite happy till dinner-time."

"You are in Miss Leatheby's confidence, I see," rejoined Everitt, flattering himself that his rage was not perceived, as he jerked his mare round to accompany his persecutor.

"You flatter me."

"Don't insult me, Lord Brigden, with this infernal affectation of sarcasm," answered Everitt, his wrath, so recently subdued, bursting forth. "If we are enemies, let us be open ones. Have the courage to be as candid as I am."

"What about?"

"You love Miss Leatheby?"

"Fudge! Everitt, you know better than I can tell you that I love no one, and am not capable of caring for any thing so much as I do for the horse I ride."

"You may not love her, but you mean to marry her if you can."

"My dear Brookbank, you wrong me in attributing to me

so much presumption," Lord Brigden answered, slowly, stroking his dark mustache. "I am old, really old, though I still manage to get myself up to a passable pitch of dandyism; she is young; I am what the religious story-books call a withered sinner; she is—but I'll leave it to you to paint her excellences. Honestly, do you think she would accept me if I offered to her?"

Everitt was silent with pure astonishment.

"Then why taunt me with a hopeless passion? There, enough has passed on this subject. I want to say something to you on another."

"I am a ready listener."

"Everitt Brookbank, you have taken a strange dislike to me—a very strong one, but I will not call it unreasonable. Your suspicion, however, that my professions of regard for you are not sincere, I must deem unaccountable. You attacked me more after the fashion of a wild Indian than a well-bred gentleman, simply because I told you that it was no use your wasting your time in looking out for Miss Leatheby. Would you have preferred me to ride on, chuckling with satisfaction in the consciousness that you were depriving yourself of a gallop to no purpose?"

"I was hasty."

"I requested Miss Leatheby not to come."

"You?"

"I told her I had an important communication to make to you, and that I would thank her not to carry you off from my cool wisdom. So she accompanied her mother to a charity bazar, and allowed me to come on here alone."

"I am obliged to you. And what important business have you to communicate to me, that induced you to send the lady we have been mentioning to Hanover Square?"

"Would you like to go into Parliament?"

Everitt started round in his saddle at the question, and looked earnestly and with surprise at Lord Brigden.

"Your lordship is playing with me."

"On my honor I am not. You are perhaps aware that I have some trifling influence in the political world; but you, doubtless, do not know that the representation of Ardlebridge, the place for which I sat when I was a boy, is at my disposal. Will you have it?"

"At what cost? I am not a rich man."

"The expenses will not be a penny beyond your fare down and back again. It's a chance for you; I don't want you to thank me; all I want of you is not to reject my offer."

"What principles do the people want in their member? that's a great point."

"Oh! you'll be able to accommodate them."

"You don't question my sincerity? or suppose I would either tamper with the honor of others, or allow my own to be trifled with?"

"What *are* your principles?"

Looking at him with an expression of pride and dislike, Everitt replied, "I have told you more than once. You have often heard me express my sentiments on politics."

"Yes; but, excuse me, how should that enlighten me on the subject? I am not asking you what it is your habit *to talk*, but what you are ready *to do*."

"You think it highly improbable that a man's action should fulfill the promise of his words?"

"Exactly so. You young men have such a proneness to indulge in magnificent professions and ignominious behavior, that really there's no knowing where to catch you. The men of my day had this advantage over you—their moral code was lax, and their general conversation utterly disreputable, but they never falsified the assertions of their lips. This is the harvest-time of cant."

"Come, my misanthrope, you won't put me down among the hypocritical tongues," Everitt answered, laughing, amused, as he always was when Lord Brigden assumed the tone of a patriarchal cynic.

"There are other cants than that of Exeter Hall. There is the exalted benevolence cant, and the liberalism cant, and the æsthetic cant—the name is legion."

"But—to return to principles."

"You mean to hats."

"Call them what you will, let us talk of them."

"It'll be time enough to do that when you are on the hustings. However, to be earnest, the member for Ardlebridge must be a quiet, orthodox Conservative, nothing extreme; he'll be able to cut in with a coalition ministry, or receive a post from a Whig minister; but a reformer he must not be."

"Which undesirable character I am. So I have only, with many thanks for your kind offer, to decline it," Everitt replied, quietly and firmly, patting the neck of his gray, who was again manifesting impatience for a gallop.

"Don't refuse in a hurry; accept quickly, if you will. You shall have three days to make up your mind in; more time I can not allow. Let us think no more about the matter now. What say you to a canter?"

As he spoke, Lord Brigden put his heel to the side of Bangor, and the noble creature bounded forward—not impetuously, but with a calm velocity. Everitt responded by giving his mare the rein, the effect of which was that he dashed past Fanny Firebell at a pace that once more roused that young lady's ambition to possess the fiery gray.

An hour after their start, the two equestrians, their horses speckled with foam and bright with ardent eyes, quitted the park and turned into Oxford Street. As they proceeded down that noble thoroughfare, many an eye of admiration was directed to them from the crowd.

"Look there. Do you see that highly respectable beggar-woman standing there with a basket of combs and a tray of buttons for sale?" asked Lord Brigden.

"Certainly. I have often observed her; she is an old ac-

quaintance of mine; and when she used to stand at the top of Constitution Hill, I often used to buy something of her, for gifts she won't accept. You are wrong in calling her a beggar."

"She used to have a child in her arms—a very good dodge in her trade, I dare say; but perhaps she is badly off just now, and can not afford to hire an infant."

"Perhaps the child was her own, and her only one, and death has taken it."

"No such luck. But, by all the wonders of the universe," continued Lord Brigden, turning in his saddle to look back to the object of their discussion, "there's Hugh Falcon pulling up and speaking to her!"

"Does he shake hands?"

"The lady has lost her right one, so he can not show her that mark of confidence."

"He is very generous to the poor; perhaps he wishes to relieve her."

"Or to study her character for his next book."

"It must be an unusual effort of romance that shall put much that is interesting into the narrative of her dreary life."

"By-the-way, Brookbank, to ask a question once more—how long have you ridden that animal?"

"Some three weeks."

"Have you bought her of Coppey?"

"No, I hire 'my Arab steed.' But how came you to know that the world contained a Coppey?"

"'How do I know?' My dear Everitt, how can you be surprised at my knowing any thing and every thing? But here's Bond Street. So fare you well. Mind, in three days. Don't fail to consider your best interests."

With a slight nod and these parting words, Lord Brigden turned down Bond Street, and left Everitt to continue his ride, or bring it with all speed to a close in the stables of Mr. Coppey.

The young man had material wherewith to occupy his thoughts. Unsolicited, a prize, such a one as less fortunate men fruitlessly spend years in striving for, had fallen into his hands. Should he reject it, simply because he would have to vote in favor of half a dozen objectionable measures which would not be carried, and against the same number of bills, in opposition to which there were, after all, very sensible arguments? As to principles—a man did not enter the House to tell the world his own principles and his own opinions, but to represent the principles and opinions of the individuals who sent him to the senate. Indeed, the position of a popular member was one that made immorality in its holder impossible, so long as he faithfully did what his constituents wished.

The electors of Ardlebridge stood in need of an advocate to represent their interests in the great national assembly; why should he, a barrister, refuse the brief, simply because he considered that those interests were not all-important in the state? The same hyper-delicacy that would restrain a man from exercising his talents in behalf of a constituency whose views he did not approve, ought also to withhold him from pleading in the law courts for a client with a weak case; and yet, who would not fail to laugh at him, if, on moral grounds, he declined to argue a cause before the judges, alleging, as a justification, that he was engaged on the wrong side? What golden harvests this opportunity, rightly treated, might lead to! He should immediately acquire position and social status, and, a matter of far greater value, he should obtain a chance of early distinction. If he could make himself useful to his party, and obtain the ear of the House; if the politicians of St. Stephen's would only treat him with a little of that flattering attention the Cambridge Union had honored him with, he might dismiss from his mind all painful feelings arising from the difference in wealth between himself and Miss Leatheby, and he might prosecute his suit

to her in the confidence that she would not, even as regarded worldly position, act unwisely in giving herself to him.

Had Lord Brigden been at his side, as these and a thousand other ensnaring and intoxicating thoughts passed rapidly through the young man's mind, his lordship would have been in no danger of hearing a second refusal of his liberal offer.

What the motive of that singular nobleman was in the friendly overture he had made to Everitt, it would be difficult to say. Perhaps he had conceived an affection for the ardent, generous nature of Everitt, so unlike his own jaded and vitiated self; it may be that he had some secret vanity to gratify in advancing the youth to honor; it is by no means improbable that he was actuated by an infernal desire to corrupt the young man's integrity by inducing him to gainsay his political profession. Anyhow, whatever motive he had, he was not a man likely, even though he recognized it, to avow it in distinct terms.

Though he bound Everitt to secrecy with regard to the approaching vacancy at Ardlebridge, Lord Brigden had admitted one other person to his confidence, to whom, after he had dined in a quiet corner of his favorite club, he wrote the following note:

"*In my nook in 'the Belvidere.'*

"I met the mad boy in the park; such a gallant swell—dressed well and in good taste, as he always is; whiskers waxed, clustering locks to vie with those of Paris, and mounted on a frantic little devil of an iron-gray mare that was scattering one awful cloud of mud and confusion all around. Honestly, I admire your selection, as far as externals go; with regard to other matters, whether his intellectual and moral peculiarities are likely to allow him to cherish any great regard for you when he comes to know you as well as I do, and whether he is calculated to do all that your worldliness will require, you are the best judge. I have done

my best to serve you, and to compel you from this time forth to own that abnegation of self is among the virtues of your correspondent. If he be not too squeamish, he shall have my seat in Parliament; and, *under certain circumstances*, I'll do my best to help him to marry the only woman in the world whom I value more than a good pointer.

"At first he was magniloquent about principles, and all other hats, and refused the offer indignantly. I laughed, and made him recall his rejection, and take three days for consideration. He will now have time to see all the advantages of a place in the senate, and having looked thereon, he will—fall. I positively mourn in anticipation over the moral wreck he will be. You recollect Marguerite did not care for the diamonds till she had seen them, and been dazzled by their brightness. Anyhow, whatever his decision may be, I shall have done you good service; if his integrity shall not be shaken, you may love him as a hero; if he take the worldly course, and be guided in the selection of his vocation by the tools Fortune has given him, you may marry him without distrust, and be assured that, as your husband, he will achieve at least a respectable position. I wish I could accomplish more, so as to prove the peculiar nature of the passion with which you have inspired me; for I am almost as much interested in studying it as in plotting for you.

"I saw my broker after I kissed hands with you this morning. I have turned over a clear seventeen hundred pounds out of that little transaction in the city, and have prudently removed my vessel from the troubled waters. You are right; money is power, and soon I shall have nothing besides money to care about. God bless you, my least bad of women.

"BRIGDEN."

When he had inclosed this letter in an envelope, had duly sealed it, and legibly directed it to Miss Leatheby, Lord Brigden consigned it to the letter-box for the post.

The next morning it lay among a dozen other missives on the breakfast table at which Frances Leatheby, delicate, refined in intellect, and beautiful by a singularly feminine elegance of form and style, took her seat in solitude; for Mrs. Leatheby (constantly suffering from ill health) and her child never breakfasted together, or saw each other before the middle of the day.

"Ah! a letter from Lord Brigden," said Frances, immediately her eye fell on the assemblage of epistles; "and not one from Barker. I declare I will have a new attorney, if that man is not more attentive. Well, then, Lord Brigden shall take precedence of the rest; that is but fair."

Sipping her cocoa, and perusing the letter leisurely, she was a subject such as a pre-Raffaelite painter would delight in depicting. Her graceful form, not lost in the pretty lounge chair she occupied; her rich, dark hair accurately dressed; the long lashes concealing the eyes that were the principal source of animation to her delicate face; her thin, pink lips, her tasteful morning costume, the rich and harmonious appointments of her boudoir, the few good pictures, the Sevres breakfast service, the pattern of the carpet, the tint of the paper, the color of the draperies, all contributed to the picture.

"Will he fall? will the tempter triumph? I am afraid not," she said, as she laid the letter down, after having perused it twice. "Little hope for him, I am afraid. Oh, that he would let me love him!" she continued, after a pause. "But why afraid? have not I still Lord Brigden? What a man he is! If he were but younger, what a career there would be before us, with our united wealth and genius! True, he is a wicked man—a very wicked man; but self-interest is more powerful than virtue, and, as this world goes, is almost as beautiful."

CHAPTER XIII.

A MEETING OF OLD FRIENDS.

"You were in a brown study, and did not turn till I had spoken twice. You won't make a good trade if you don't look sharper for customers."

It was with these words that Hugh Falcon addressed Madge Gardiner in Oxford Street just as Lord Brigden and Everitt passed on upon their horses.

"I was dreaming, sir, 'tis true," answered Madge.

"And what about?"

The woman colored and hesitated before she replied, "You can guess, sir; 'twas about Nancy and her friends."

"I bring you a message from one of them—the lady whom I told you I should see. She gave me a capital account of Nancy, who is already making a figure in school."

"Will the lady see me?"

"You may call on her when you like, and you will be admitted. The address is Miss Nugent, Elm Cottage, Slaughton. Any one will direct you to the house when you have arrived in the village. Do you know the way?"

Mrs. Gardiner did know the way, and was very grateful for the permission to call on her benefactress.

"And how are you? How do you get on without the little one? You must miss her."

"Very much—more than I can tell. At first it was a cruel privation to have to go about alone, although I had the privilege of seeing her every day. And I used, sir, to find myself a crying and making all sorts of fears about her, thinking that since God had made her blind, it was presumptuous in me to wish to have it altered, and fretting that some harm

would come to her when she no longer had her mother's arms about her. It was very foolish of me, but I soon got better when Mr. Hassell scolded me (not in anger, sir), and told me that it was not so much for the girl as myself that I grieved, and that I oughtn't to be so selfish."

"Well, Miss Nugent will make some arrangement for your seeing the child whenever you like. The mistress of the Orphan Institute will have orders to admit you daily."

As Hugh moved on, after having made this communication, the woman simply but very warmly thanked him for his kindness. "It has altered the whole world to me, sir, the having friends to speak gently to me i' the streets. It don't only make my lot easy, but it almost causes me to be thankful that I am no better than I am."

"How so?"

"Why, sir, as I stand here a selling these cheap articles, and manifest to all passers as an object for charity and benevolence, I receive such attentions as you are so good as to bestow on me, without the pain of the danger of some one looking on at all connecting you with my poverty and lowliness; whereas, if I was a few moves higher up, and you met me, not working in the streets, but going to employment in a house, I should not like you to stop and speak with me, for fear folks should think there was something like an equality between us. Do I make myself plain, sir?"

"There's no disgrace in poverty," said Hugh.

Madge looked at him, tall, and graceful, and fashionably dressed, glanced at a miserable object bent double with years of toil and poverty, shambling along the curb-stone in rags, raised her eyes upward, and then replied, "God grant, sir, that you may never prove what you say, in your own person."

Hugh proceeded in the direction of the city; the woman moved on a few paces toward the Park, and the crowd of urchins, whom curiosity and wonder had assembled round

the unusual sight of a gentleman in conversation with a poor woman, broke up and merged in the streams of pedestrians.

Madge, however, did not continue long at work after separating from her patron, for the impulse seized her to take a holiday. Although Hugh had caught her dreaming, she had driven a brisk business that morning, and positively found herself in possession of a clear ninepence from the day's sale, after deducting the price she had to pay for the articles she vended. On the strength of this wealth, Madge determined forthwith to avail herself of the permission just granted her, and to present herself that very evening to Miss Nugent.

As much stirred at the prospect of such dissipation as many young ladies are by the near approach of their first London ball, Madge started off to the other side of the river, and arrived at the Elephant and Castle before it was quite dark; and at the door of that celebrated house of entertainment she got into an omnibus that engaged to convey her to Slaughton for sixpence. Madge's plan was to sup, after having made her call, on what the remaining threepence of her day's earnings would procure her, and to conclude her holiday by walking home to her distant corner of Whitechapel.

The night had fairly closed in when, in answer to Mrs. Gardiner's summons, the door of Elm Cottage was opened by a maid whose face betokened some small amount of astonishment at such a visitor at such an hour.

"Is the lady at home?"

"Whom do you mean by the lady?"

"Miss Nugent. Is she at home?"

"Yes; she is back from evening service. What do you want with her?"

"To see her. Mr. Hugh Falcon told me the lady would see me if I called. I am the mother of a little girl the lady has been good to."

The mention of Hugh's name removed the suspicion that had taken possession of the domestic's charitable breast that Madge had called more with a view to obtain possession of the umbrellas in the hall than with any more honest purpose.

"Step in, and I'll ask if Miss Nugent can see you."

The answer to the inquiry was satisfactory, and before another minute had elapsed Madge was shown into a room, furnished as a library, and containing a large round table, whereat sat Miss Nugent by a shaded lamp, with papers and writing materials before her.

"I beg pardon, madam, for coming at such an hour as this, but Mr. Falcon did not tell me I might come till it was late i' this afternoon, and once having got the leave I could not stop away."

"I am glad to see you, and this time is as convenient for me as any other. You have not seen Nancy for a fortnight; you must long to see her. She is a nice little child, and will, I am sure, do well; she is already a pet of mine."

The lamp, which was the only source of light in the room, with the exception of a not bright fire, was so shaded that Miss Nugent was in such darkness that the features of her face were invisible to Madge, though the latter stood in full light before the lady of the house.

"I will give you a note to the matron of the Institute, and she will, I doubt not, in compliance with my request, allow you to visit Nancy as often as you wish," resumed Miss Nugent, in the dark. "Don't stand; sit down while I write a few lines of introduction."

Madge complied, and took a seat.

"How old are you?" inquired Kate, when she next spoke, after having laid aside her pen.

"Treading close on forty-five, ma'am."

"You were not young when you married?"

"I was not, ma'am. I married late, but I married well. My husband was a good man."

"He was a sailor?"

"The same, madam. We married at Plymouth, when I was at service."

"Oh! then you were a house-servant before you married?"

"For many years, but not in many places."

"In whose families did you live?"

"First in Dr. Ardlow's, and afterward in Squire Hereford's, in Somersetshire."

"In what capacity were you engaged?"

"As housemaid."

"What family had Dr. Ardlow?"

"Only a daughter, madam, and a lady who was governess to her, for Mrs. Ardlow was dead."

"I used to know Dr. Ardlow, and stay in his house, so your having lived with him gives me an interest in you. Do you remember the name of the lady who was Miss Ardlow's governess when you first joined the family?"

"It was Miss Nunneaton."

Miss Nugent started at the sound of the name, and gave a half-suppressed cry of astonishment that caused Madge to look into the darkness of the corner in which the lady held her position.

"And what was your name before you married?"

"Margaret Pretty—the doctor used to call me Matty."

"Tell me something about Miss Nunneaton."

"She was a very beautiful young lady, ma'am, very young, for in age she was less than I, and I was quite a girl; and she was as good as she was sweet to the eye. You can hardly fancy, madam, how strong friends we were! Every day she showed her care for me, teaching me to write, and lending me books, and showing me how to understand them; and every Sunday evening I used to spend an hour or more with her, reading the Bible and praying."

"Was she fortunate in life?"

"She was an orphan, brought up from her infancy on

charity. One can hardly call her, who never knew father or mother, fortunate."

"But is she prosperous?"

"I hope so, madam."

"Don't you *know* what has become of her?"

"No, I do not. I haven't seen her for years; she has gone her way and I mine; they have been separate, but I hope it may not be presumption in me to believe they'll take us both to heaven."

"She left Dr. Ardlow's? Can you tell me under what circumstances?"

Madge was silent; and instead of answering to the question, she only rose uneasily from her seat, and advanced a step or two as if under the desire to get out of the bright light and visit the dim side of the apartment.

"When did you see her last? where? under what circumstances?" continued the lady, speaking quickly, and constraining herself with a painful effort to self-possession.

"Madam, what is it you're searching for? Don't ask me what I mayn't answer. I wouldn't forget the duty I owe you, but it is not for me to talk just every thing about others. You requested me to tell you what the lady was, and I obeyed to the best of my power. She was a child of God, and I can't say more to show how I love her than by saying that, in all the years since we last beheld each other, never a night has gone by in which I have not mentioned her in my prayers. My husband allus prayed for her, and so does Nancy."

"Matty—Matty!" said the soft voice behind the lamp.

"For mercy's sake, ma'am, come out to me from the dark, and from behind the shade, and let me look at you!" exclaimed Madge, starting forward again.

"Keep there, Matty, keep there," the gentle voice returned. "I'll answer my questions instead of troubling you. It was five-and-twenty years ago that you last kissed Kate

Nunneaton, and she bade you farewell. The night was still and calm, and it was very silent too, when you and she passed out of Southampton to the spot where she was received into the London coach. She was weak from severe and protracted illness; her knees trembled beneath her weight; her pocket was almost without money; her only friend in the world was you, who had nursed her in her extreme sickness, and comforted her in her extreme affliction; the battle of life had to be fought by her, and she was about to commence the strife, faint in body, and marked with—with—"

As she spoke, she advanced from her place of comparative concealment toward her astonished listener, and closed her address by taking hold of Madge's remaining hand, and embracing her.

What was it that caused a sudden revulsion of feeling in the latter? Why did she start back from the endearing arm with horror, and make a sign of retreating without ceremony from the room?

"Matty—you don't reject me? How is it that I have never heard of you? Did none of my letters ever reach you?"

"Dear madam—lady—friend, for you have been my friend ever since we used to pray together—don't use such words. I to reject you! How can that be possible? But much as I have of late been desiring to throw myself afore the feet of her who had promised to befriend my child, and to give her the care and instruction my wretchedness can not command for the babe of my breast, had I known who that good lady was, I would have walked fifty miles in the contrary direction sooner than I would have put myself in her way. Oh, that I had never seen you! It's a raking up old memories that must pain you enough without any thing to sharpen up the pricks! It's putting you in a false position, and must almost make it seem as if I have sought you to draw from you a recognition to advantage myself by; the which last,

indeed, as I love you, darling, as my own sister, is not the truth."

"Matty—dear Matty—why keep so distant? why draw away from me? When I was deserted and outcast, you sacrificed all your own interests to help me; when it was thought I should die, you were with me, your voice encouraged, your hand fed me, your lips kissed me. Why do you now withhold yourself from me?"

The tears fell down the pale and agitated face of the speaker as she made this appeal, but they had not the effect of softening Madge, who maintained an erect attitude, and held firm to the resolution she had formed.

"Dear madam, it must be so as I tell you, indeed it must. From the day I parted with you, I determined to lose sight of you; to help you to prosper I was unable; all that my presence near you could do would be to wound you by pointing to what I trusted you would think of as little as possible —this I saw. Your letters reached me, but I didn't reply to 'em for the simple reason that I knew we ought to part company. I went away from Plymouth for some time, and when I was married, three years after, it was a satisfaction to me to feel that I should so be drawn away from the place that you would not be able to find me, even if you tried. My husband, to whom only of all mortals I told what had passed between us, always encouraged me in my resolve, and felt as I felt. I don't say but what, since his death, the thought has often crossed me that I should like to know where to find you, so that in a day of need I might have known where to look for a friend for Nancy. But all that God has arranged for me."

She turned, on uttering these last words, as if to depart, but Miss Nugent clung to her.

"Dear lady, have I been your friend?" Madge said, in a tone of expostulation and firmness; "have I hitherto shown love and prudence for you? and has God smiled on me in

bringing me to you just as I needed your help? If so, let me guide you in this. You won't see me again, unless something especial happens to change my mind. Don't trouble yourself with wishing to shower worldly blessings on me; pour them on my child. Don't try to stop me; if you do, you'll hinder me from performing my duty. *I have a work in life appointed to me to accomplish.*"

Such decision and fixity of purpose were in Madge's look that Kate Nugent did not contend with her, but sank back in her chair. A minute more, and Madge had speedily retired from the room without another word—had opened the hall door for herself, and passed out into the black night and the wide world, away from her friend's home, away from the shelter and protecting love that friend had offered her.

Minutes followed minutes, the time-piece on the mantle-shelf measuring them out in methodical ticks to the past; the lamp stood on the library table, throwing a brilliant glare on the books on one side of the apartment; and, still, motionless, unweeping, with her white forehead clasped by her thin hands, sat Kate Nugent in the dimness behind the shade.

What was she thinking of?

Many of the world who knew her esteemed her as one so sanctified by holy thoughts, pure life, and devout deeds, that her name was not to be uttered without an emotion of reverence. Was there some black secret behind the unstained curtain? Was her career, so marked with Christian endeavor, only a fair temple erected in memory of bitterly repented crimes? only the exquisitely wrought tomb, ever increasing in size and richness of adornment, in which hopes long dead and youthful errors lay embalmed?

CHAPTER XIV.

AS WE ALL KNEW.

It is no just matter for surprise that Hugh Falcon, having once paid a visit to his cousin Isabel, repeated it, and finding the repetition gratefully received, became a frequent caller at her house. To a disappointed man—and disappointed Hugh had been in more points than his love for Mrs. Dillingborough—it frequently happens that great solace is experienced in contemplating the field of his overthrow, and in gazing on the prize he failed to win. Next to the pleasures of hope are those of regret, and perhaps next to the pleasures of regret may be ranked those derived from the possession of a desired object.

Hugh naturally was unselfish, and prone to look out for any one's interests sooner than his own, to which disposition he owed a reputation among his companions for being very "unpractical;" the word by which greedy mediocrity pours forth its contempt for charity and its hatred for genius. Hugh's first thought, therefore, on renewing his friendship for Isabel, was for *her* rather than himself. For years he had abstained from gratifying his wish to be near her, from consideration for her position; and when he had at length been thrown in her way, he would have speedily retired had he discerned in her conduct to him any signs that she was aware of the warm affection he bore her. Her demeanor, however, completely put him at rest on this point, and convinced him she had never regarded him in any other aspect than that of a relation who, though much her senior, had condescended to be kind to her. What, then, was there to restrain him from seeking her society, watching her as she went, her

gentle ways, and speculating how different she and he would have been had she been his as he was hers?

That Isabel gave a cordial welcome to Hugh, and found a lively satisfaction in his companionship, was in accordance with nature; for she was ever ready to answer claims on her affection, and he was especially gifted with the power of making all who approached him pleased alike with him and with themselves. Moreover, Hugh was a representative of that old home at Kilverton, once so fair and lovely in the light her childhood's poetry threw over it. Of the many sorrows her married life brought her, the least was not that which came from her disillusionment on the subject of her father and his kingdom. It was impossible that her clear mind, once brought into the world, should fail to read aright her father's nature, and duly to estimate his conduct in consigning her to a husband old enough to be her grandfather. She did not methodically set about the task of measuring and gauging his virtues and failings; the truth flashed upon her, and as she beheld it, she started with horror and pain at her unfilial conduct in seeing what she had not looked for. Like those poor creatures who gain their subsistence by pacing the streets, searching for pieces of paper, and pins, and dropped thread and halfpence, moving on slowly, and cautiously, and stealthily, never looking up to the heavens, but ever keeping their eyes fixed on the ground, lest some wretched spoil in the gutter, worth a tiny fraction of the meanest coin, should escape their observation—like to these was the gallant Captain Potter, of Kilverton; and Isabel saw it. But Hugh, with his cheery laugh, gay smiles, frank outbursts of sentiment, and humorous betrayals of feeling, in recalling her old home to her mind, suggested only that on which she had pleasure in resting—the sunny garden, and the rich scenery that surrounded it, and the happy hours she had passed, and the innocent hopes she had cherished in it.

The old rector was sincerely glad to see his young wife

enjoying the society of her cousin, and soon conceived a regard for Hugh that almost merited the name of affection.

"You must not let us be in the country many weeks without dropping down upon us. We shall be looking for you every day till you come, and, once with us, you won't have a chance of speedily getting away," said the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough cordially, a week or ten days before his departure from London to Brandon.

"You are very kind to me."

"Not at all—not at all, my dear boy. Ah! what am I saying? but you can allow an old white-headed man like me to say 'dear boy.' Not at all; I consider myself very much indebted to you for giving us so much of your time. You do Isabel a world of good; her spirits are always the better when she has had a talk with you. And she wants change."

"Yet I should think her capable of being contented without it. She tells me she prefers the monotony of the country to the bustle of town."

"She's so good a creature, she'd be happy any where, and under almost any circumstances; but she requires change—every young thing does. An old husband has a great charge in a young wife; autumn and spring—you know the old saying, Hugh. I like to be dozing in my easy-chair when she ought to be dancing about in half a dozen balls a night."

"But she never dances, and does not care for balls."

"She says so; but don't you think that, in professing a dislike for the exercise, she is only trying to please me by putting aside one of the great distinctions age makes between us?"

Hugh did not reply.

After a pause, the rector, as if a thought had just occurred to him, put another question: "Then you think disparity of age is of no importance in matrimony? That's what you think?"

"I am sure you have no reason to dissent from such an

opinion. What more could my cousin be to you than she is, if she were equal to you in years?"

"Nay, that's not the only question to be put," responded the old man, with a bright twinkling of his eye. "Rather ask, 'How much more she would have become to herself and others, not me alone, if she had wedded a man of age corresponding to her own? Now, say you had married her."

"I do not think she would have been a happier woman," replied Hugh, staggered by the rector's eccentric questions.

"You mean it? We'll hear what she says. I'll ask her when I get home."

"Pray do no such thing," exclaimed Hugh, with alarm.

The rector laughed with exultation at his own sprightliness, and having cordially shaken hands with Hugh, proceeded toward Westminster, where he had calls to make before his snug quite-at-home dinner with Mrs. Dillingborough. Hugh watched him till he was out of sight, and for some half hour afterward did little else, as he strolled on, but reflect on what had been said, and attempt to set accurately before his mind the estimate at which he held the rector.

This latter operation Hugh found the reverse of easy; there were in the old man so many conflicting characteristics that it was difficult to state exactly his qualities and worth. At one moment he prosed in the twaddle of old age, the next he was alive with sprightliness; his easy good-nature was balanced by occasional irritability, and his lethargic somnolency was counteracted by a quick energy; and the selfish greed which, through life, had always actuated him in all transactions affecting his worldly interests, was forgotten in the gracefulness with which he, every now and then, displayed his sympathy with others. Garrulous and cautious, open-hearted and plotting, obscure in intellect and shrewd by turns, as the atmosphere, or his finances, or the state of his digestion commanded, an intricate and altogether uncommon study was the courtly old clergyman.

"Hold hard, Hugh Falcon, unless you are pressing on to keep an engagement, or wish to be by yourself, for I'll turn the length of the street with you."

"Ha! good morning! I have just shaken hands with the father, and, lo! here is the son," Hugh answered to Captain Frederick Dillingborough, who leisurely descended the steps of a club-house.

Between the captain and Hugh two or three months had produced a degree of intimacy that scarcely seemed likely to occur when the two had, years previously, all but come to a violent quarrel in a country house.

After the meeting in Isabel's drawing-room, Frederick Dillingborough, without delay, commenced paying Hugh divers attentions, which, at first, aroused in the latter distrust, irritation, and many other feelings the reverse of pleasure. But the captain was not to be repulsed; for, of genuine irascibility he had a very small fund for a proud man (indeed, so little had he of the explosive element that he often found it necessary to manufacture manly indignation for party and other purposes), and he had an especial object in making himself agreeable to Hugh; and soon he succeeded to his desire. Their politics being alike made it only natural that the member of the House of Commons should impart, under seal of confidence, to the distinguished journalist (who was his mother's cousin) certain pieces of ministerial gossip before they had oozed out beyond the limits of the best informed circles. More than a few times Captain Dillingborough was of essential service to our friend of the pen in this way, giving him information that caused a general rush on the part of the public into the office of the St. Stephen's Chronicle.

It is no wonder that, after this, Hugh thought he had better not cherish enmity against so useful a friend. And, indeed, his hostile sentiments were soon dissolved, or at least much weakened, by other influences than those which played upon self-interest. He found that Captain Dillingborough

spoke warmly of him behind his back, praising him with warmth to the rector, and with enthusiasm to Isabel, which last personage found occasion to tell Hugh how apt strangers were to form a harsh judgment of her step-son, how she herself had trembled before him and mistrusted him, and how all, when they came to know him well, esteemed him as highly as she did.

Again, Hugh was a vain man, as all men who subsist by amusing fashionable people as "wits" must necessarily be, and he was not dead to the éclat of numbering a distinguished naval officer, of good family and fortune, and of the best fashion, among his intimate friends; for, though much greater men than Captain Frederick Dillingborough took hold of Hugh's hand in May-Fair, or thanked him with a nod for the good song he had sung them the night before, he was quite aware that those noble gentlemen no more regarded him in the light of equality than they held their coachmen to be their superiors. And Hugh liked being greeted by the members of "good sets" as one whom they really knew, and did not merely "honor by knowing." He was not a flunky (who is in these days of simplicity and independence?), but he found gratification in surrounding himself with eligible companions and other smart possessions, on which the flunky spirit sets too high a price.

"Then you know that they are ready for a start? You will dine with them some day before they leave town?"

"I have arranged to do so next Thursday; and I have all but accepted an invitation to visit them at Brandon before the summer is over, or at Copley."

"An admirable plan! I'll have my horses sent down, and will join you; and, depend upon it, we shall make out the time very jollily together. What say you to the plan? Or shall we keep them at Brandon during December and January, and hunt with the Peterhouse hounds?"

"I return your words, and say 'an admirable plan!' I suppose it will suit the host and hostess."

"No fear of that. Then you will hold yourself engaged, and I may consider the bargain struck."

"You may."

"You see Brigden riding there?"

"Yes, and—yes—my friend Brookbank with him."

"Oh, Brookbank is his name? Has he money?"

"Not much."

"Play?"

"Never."

"Who is he?"

"He is heir to his uncle's baronetcy and a small fortune."

"That all? What, then, can Brigden always be showing himself about London with him for?"

"Your surprise at any one seeking Brookbank's society would be less if you knew him. He is a very talented and agreeable fellow."

"Which qualities Brigden has himself, and consequently does not require in a companion."

Hugh laughed as he replied, "An eagle may be seen away from a carcass, although a carcass can not be found away from the eagles."

"Hah! there's that poor old body with the one hand. You must know her by sight, for she is always to be seen about the streets."

"She's an especial friend of mine; we always exchange words when we meet," Hugh answered, as he and his friend crossed Parliament Street. "This time she'll be taken by surprise, for her back is turned toward us, and we shall be down upon her before she sees us. Good-day, Mrs. Gardiner."

Madge started as she heard the voice, so well known and so much loved by her, and turned round rapidly to look at her benefactor. For an instant the expression of her face was that of gladness, but, as her eyes passed from Hugh to Captain Dillingborough, it immediately gave way to that of affright, and, if poor Madge's gentle face can be said to have

had the power of proclaiming evil passions, of hate. The air was dramatic with which she drew herself up, erect and indignant, and raised her mutilated right arm, as if wishing that a stronger would come to her aid, and strike down the man she pointed at with horror.

The scene occupied only a few seconds, but it was not lost on either Hugh or Frederick Dillingborough.

"What the deuce did the poor thing mean by showing off in that grand tragedy style?" said Captain Dillingborough, when they had passed on.

"Do you know any thing of her?"

"I? nothing. I have often seen her about the town, as, indeed, who has not? But I am not aware that she ever put her eyes on me before."

"She must have had meaning in her conduct."

"I suppose so; at least, the facts of her not liking me, and of her being maimed, will not justify us in putting her down beyond the pale of rational beings."

An acquaintance at this moment coming up to Captain Dillingborough, and entering into conversation about some proceedings in the House, prevented the subject of Madge's singular behavior being further pursued at the time, and Hugh almost immediately separated himself from Frederick Dillingborough's arm, and went off to make a call in the Temple.

The next occasion of his meeting Captain Dillingborough was when he presented himself on the appointed Thursday to dine at the rector's table.

"We are quite by ourselves," observed the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough, as he received Hugh in the drawing-room. "A family party."

"Usually a very dull thing," put in the captain.

"Hardly dull, if it be one of those delightful meetings usually designated family gatherings, at which uncles and aunts, brothers and sisters, combine to condole with each

other on grievances that ought not to be alluded to, and to depreciate successes that good-nature would extol. The feud and venom of family affection on state occasions are at least not dull to witness."

"How bitter my cousin Hugh is to-day!" said Isabel, softly. "We do not ridicule family ties in this house. When we were debating if we should have some friends here to-day, Frederick begged me to invite no one to intrude on the family circle."

"Dinner is ready," cried the rector. "If the fish is not to our mind, we will season it with a little of the gall Hugh recommends."

The time that was spent in the drawing-room certainly was not marked by any exhibitions of domestic bitterness. It was agreed, as Isabel rose to leave the room, that not one approach to sparring had been made by any one. There was not much mirth at the table, for the little dinner was too good to be trifled with, and the cool Hock demanded silent gratitude rather than the excitement that Champagne delights to be honored with; not to add that the old rector, who did not care about wit much at any time, was most antagonistic to it when it presumed to divide attention with the productions of his cook; that Captain Dillingborough cared almost as little for humor as his father; and lastly, that, as a rule, laughter and merriment can not be gracefully sustained by a party of four. Still, the dinner went off well: Hugh had seen Bishop Congreve's latest tract, and imparted its contents to his host, who responded with an orthodox growl at tract-writers, and a long quotation from Cicero's letters, that gave him an appetite for the third course, and another brimmer of hock; the captain had an anecdote for Isabel fresh from the lips of one of her lady friends; the rector had counsel for all three—he begged them not to talk too much; above all, not to laugh—for the calf's head stewed in the Indian sauce, the receipt for which was given him by

the last governor-general, was exquisite. Hugh obeyed the command, and, talker as he usually was, did not find obedience irksome; for, lying back in his chair, sipping his wine, and leisurely paying his attention to the dishes which the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough especially recommended to his notice, he found ample sources of enjoyment, among which the pleasure of watching Isabel was not least.

When Isabel withdrew, the character of the entertainment certainly altered to Hugh, and he found it dull; for the rector made some unquestionable signs of approaching slumber, and Captain Dillingborough, cold, handsome, and silent, contented himself with filling his glass as the Burgundy came round to him.

At the first opportunity, Hugh rose from the table.

"Ah! you off? The bottle is not held in such esteem as it was in my young days," said the rector, brightening up from a doze.

"We'll join you in the drawing-room in ten minutes," said the captain.

"Why should we not go with him?" asked the rector.

"I was going to ask you, my dear father, to give me your attention for a short time while I spoke to you on some business affairs I should like to arrange with you before you go into the country."

"With all my heart," rejoined the father; and then turning to Hugh, he added, "but if that is to be the arrangement, don't expect to see me again to-night, for when I and Fred have had our chat, it will be high time for me to take a nap before going to bed, for I have a long day arranged for me to-morrow. So fare you well. Make Isabel sing you her new song; you have not heard it yet."

Having shaken the rector's hand, Hugh left him to discuss business matters with his son, and ascended to the drawing-room, where he knew he should find Isabel glad to receive him. He was too well pleased at the moment to think, as

he mounted the stairs, that he had of late indulged rather frequently in *tête-à-tête* conversations with his cousin, or to reflect that in a large majority of the times when he had been her only companion, he was indebted for the pleasure he derived from such a position to Captain Dillingborough's contrivances. Indeed, this latter fact never struck him till it was too late—sadly too late—for him to be benefited by the knowledge of it.

"You are just in time to see my boy," Isabel exclaimed, in a whisper, as Hugh entered.

"What! the little urchin not in bed yet?"

"Oh, he has been in bed for hours, but he cried and was restless; and nurse thought, if he was wrapped up and brought to sit with me here for a short time, the change would compose him; and it has done so. He is fast asleep in nurse's arms."

"He won't wake now, sir; you may kiss him, if you please," nurse said, in a low voice.

Hugh availed himself of the permission, and the maid disappeared with her charge.

"Would you not like to have him here a little longer? I know you delight in looking at him," Isabel said, with that simplicity of manner which made her kindness so winning.

"No, no, thank you. He is very lovely; but what's the good of my wasting my heart on him?"

"What's against it?"

"He is not *mine*."

"But surely you do not confine your affections to what pertains immediately to yourself?"

"I was going to add—and he can *never* be mine."

"And is it your rule never to care for any thing you can not obtain possession of?"

"Nay, nay," replied Hugh, sadly, "I was not talking of what I do or attempt to do, but what would be a prudent course."

"Are cupidity and affection one and the same with you? you make me ask."

"We men are very selfish, Isabel—at least I am. Our hearts scarcely begin to beat but our brains are busy with plotting how we may best acquire."

"Don't say so, cousin Hugh," Isabel answered, gravely. "I would not either wish you to love little, or fear that you love unwisely."

Hugh smiled. "You may not scold me, for I want you to sing me your new song. Mr. Dillingborough told me to ask you for it."

"You shall hear it when you have had some coffee."

Hugh took a cup of coffee, which was always excellent in the rector's house, from a servant who entered with the hot aromatic beverage as Isabel spoke.

"Don't you have any? Here is only one cup."

"None for me, at this late hour," Isabel answered, retiring to a distant part of the room.

Hugh had stirred the coffee, and taken a few sips, when Isabel was back again by his side with a water-color landscape in her hand.

"Witherstone and the valley, from Copley—beautifully executed. Is it yours?"

"Yours, if you will accept it. You told me of your dismal rooms in such a melancholy strain that I thought I would give you something to brighten them up with. Now you must frame it, hang it up, and persuade yourself that it is something exquisite."

"And you executed it yourself?"

"All myself."

"I did not know you were so good an artist."

"I was not before I was married; but since then I have learned many things. Sometimes I have a great deal of time on my hands."

"None that is dreary?"

"None that ought to be," Isabel answered, simply, and sadly too, as she removed her hand from the back of Hugh's chair, and again retired to the back of the room.

The next time Hugh heard her voice, it came from the piano, at which she had seated herself.

"My husband told you to ask me for my new song. Hear it. The words are nothing; it is the air that is so exquisitely plaintive."

Dream of gladness, thou hast perish'd,
Thou hast passed away before me!
Darling hope, too fondly cherish'd,
Thou hast left me to deplore thee!
Yet—oh, yet—most dear deceiver,
If thou wouldst appear again,
I would be thy firm believer,
Though it cost a bitterer pain.

Tender accents reassured me
When I faltered; and the measure
Of bewitching music lured me,
To rely on fleeting pleasure.
Still of thee the recollection
Is so lovely, that the cry
Of my heart's most deep dejection
Has a tone of victory.

Hugh did not speak when her rich voice, earnest and pathetic, ceased to make itself heard; and Isabel, too, remained silent. Perhaps the song had touched her, for who is there whose own heart has not proved how "'tis better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all?" Or perhaps she did not break the silence because she felt Hugh's speechlessness was to be respected.

"I will sing again," she at length said, when the pause had been of some minutes' duration.

Hugh raised his head from his hands into which it had sunk, and expressed his thanks in a voice not audible to Isabel.

"It is something sad, but it has comforted me before now. You will like it."

You say, "Why harp upon a string
That vibrates with a mournful sound?
Why dost thou ever love to sing
A song of grief, when joys abound?
Look around."

Go ask the winds wherefore they blow,
The modest rose what means its scent;
You answer, "God has made them so,
Thus do they as their Master meant—
Rest content."

In truth, he gives the flowers their scent,
For him the north wind blows;
And may it not be his intent
That I, the sorrows he bestows,
Should disclose?

The song ended, she quitted the piano and came back to her cousin with so soft a step that he started when he felt her again at his side. There was in her manner to him a protecting tenderness such as women display to sick men. And, in truth, Isabel regarded Hugh as an invalid, pitying him as she would have pitied any sufferer, and at the same time entertaining a compassionate admiration for him, as for a great one brought low. Women have a great want—the want of some strong power on which to rely; and equal to their want of support is their yearning to support others: thus are they devout to God, and merciful to man.

"Hugh, I am very glad you have promised to come into the country to us."

"Thank you. I shall enjoy visiting the old places very much."

"The country air will do you good, put color into your pale cheeks, and make you more cheerful. And I mean to nurse you—see that you keep early hours, and commit no imprudences."

"You seem to think I am ill."

"You are ill—you're not happy."

Hugh lifted his head, and gazed into her truthful eyes—dark, luminous, and so emphatically womanly—and he read in them the language of her warm, guileless heart. Once again her image was impressed upon him, differing from the picture he had long guarded of her as a child. Each turn of her bright ringlets, each fold of her light silk dress, the fair, soft face, the crimson scarf that she held over her arm—often again, in sleepless nights and hopeless days, the picture was to rise before him.

"You are right; but unhappiness is a difficult disease to minister to: you are a confident physician."

"Fortune favors the brave."

"Foiled once, would you try again?"

"The task is not so hard. Do you know, Hugh, we have in many respects suffered alike? You wondered just now at my advance in painting, and a few weeks ago you were surprised at my proficiency in music. They were my friends when my heart was heavy. Of course, my little grief—whatever it was—was not like yours; no, indeed, not like yours; but it was enough to open my understanding, and it enables me to see how greatly such suffering as yours is to be pitied and admired. My sorrow was over the death of hopes almost unborn—romantic visions—childish dreams; but yours is for a passion, which I am afraid, from what has escaped you, grew to full power before it was clear that it could not be gratified. Still, we are alike in this; as I said, I have been unhappy, and so have you, though in a greater degree."

Starting from his seat, he snatched hold of her hand, and pressed it to his lips, saying passionately, "Isabel, don't speak so to me; I can not bear it; such kindness will kill me."

The words were scarcely uttered when the door of the room opened, and Captain Dillingborough entered to say that

his father was napping in the easy-chair of his library, and that he himself must take his leave without delay.

Hugh quitted the house with him and accompanied him to the end of the street, where a cab-stand supplied the latter with a carriage in which to proceed to his club.

As Hugh stepped forward on his way to his chambers, after saying farewell to Frederick Dillingborough, he heard on the pavement behind him a rustling, and a soft but rapid tread, as of a woman speedily retreating from the spot where he stood. Turning instantly round, he saw a female figure gliding away under the shadow of the houses.

"Poor Madge! she is determined to accomplish her task!" was his only comment on the circumstance.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TEMPTERS.

"DEAR EVERITT,—To-day is the day for decision. If you can ride with me, be at the same place in the Row, at the same hour. If you can not come, write me a line, and send it immediately to my den by a messenger."

This note was not signed, but Lord Brigden's seal upon it, and its purport, as well as the handwriting, prevented Everitt from being at a loss as to who his correspondent was.

"I won't see him," said Everitt, putting the brief epistle down on his breakfast-table. "But he shall not long remain in ignorance as to my determination, so here goes for a reply."

Seating himself at his desk, he wrote an answer with a few hasty dashes of his pen, and before inclosing it in an envelope, read it aloud.

"MY DEAR LORD,—Many thanks for your goodness. Do

not be angry with me for declining your noble offer. My reasons it is unnecessary for me to state, for you know them, and can turn them into ridicule better than any other man. It may gratify you to be informed that this decision has cost me a struggle, and that at one time it seemed more than probable that the result of the contest would be against 'hats.'

"Believe me, my dear lord, your obliged and grateful

"EVERITT BROOKBANK."

When Lord Brigden read this note, which he did within half an hour of its being penned, a smile of satisfaction passed over his pale, haggard face, and the dull, coffee-berry eyes sparkled with that animation they always possessed when their owner was much pleased. Sitting in a dressing-gown over his late breakfast, with a chin unshorn, his iron-gray mustache unwaxed, and his head of hair as yet not dressed for the day by his servant, his lordship, before the arrival of Everitt's reply, had presented an appearance disordered and unimposing, not to say dilapidated; but, immediately he had perused the letter, his whole aspect brightened up, and triumphed over the obstructions of an incomplete toilet.

"Well done! I was afraid he would accept my generous proposal, and then I should most diplomatically have been cutting my own throat. But, thank God! he has thrown up the cards just when I had put the game in his own hands. What a prize he has lost! Still, he is right; for if he has principles, and if principles are any thing (and *to him*, of course, they are something), he would not be happy acting against them, even for the sake of a beautiful woman and a hundred and fifty thousand pounds."

For a few minutes after this soliloquy he seemed lost in thought, sitting without moving any one part of his person, and gazing up at the ceiling.

"Yes. I will write to her," he at length said. "Henri —Henri."

In answer to the summons, Henri, a French valet, made his appearance, and stood at the door ready to receive his master's command.

"Paper-and pens—quick."

In an instant Henri wheeled an elegant little writing-stand from its off-duty station against one of the walls of the room up to Lord Brigden's chair.

"That will do for the present. You may leave me."

Henri obeyed, and Lord Brigden, left to himself, wrote as follows:

"Inclosed is the boy's answer. Honestly, I am sorry for him, and, in a certain way, sorry for you. How annoying it is that none of us, not even the most powerful, can have it all our own way in this world! What will you do? Can you resign one ambition on which you have fixed your warmest regard, and content yourself with the pleasures to be derived, in a private station, from the cultivation of the domestic affections, and those intellectual pursuits which all wise men have combined to extol? After all, perhaps the cynics are right in their contempt for worldly distinction. Say you become a countess before you die; the honor has its drawbacks, and it soon comes to an end. But I need not advise you. You will not, I know, act without consideration. If you smile at this paternal tone, do not laugh at *me* for it.

"Send me back the boy's letter.

"BRIGDEN."

In the course of the day, Frances Leatheby returned Everitt's letter to Lord Brigden, and with it a few words, which shall be here transcribed.

"I knew it would be so, and am really afflicted at his perversity. What do *you* mean by preaching? Bless me, why don't you take orders? Don't you think it is just possible

that a countess's skeleton is happier than a parish pauper's? Bring E. B. to Lady Luscombe's box next Friday; we shall be there, and he shall go with us to Mrs. Ambrose Hill's afterward. You think me cold, heartless, calculating; if you did not deem so, you would neither admire nor profess admiration for me. But you are mistaken. If ever woman loved, I love him. F. L."

"I know you do," observed Lord Brigden, with a sneer, as he squeezed the note up in his hand after having read it. "I know you do; but you won't marry him, for all that. *Your* soul is the property of ———, and *he* belongs to the other master."

To return to Everitt, whose epistolary achievement has produced this digression, it may be as well to give a sketch of that gentleman's proceedings from the time when he and Hugh spent an hour or two together after Mrs. Dalmaine's party.

Everitt had done as most young men do when they fall deeply in love; he had forsworn composure of mind, had spent his days in passing from exaltations of hope to abysses of fear, sinking and rising without regard to the ordinary laws of cause and effect. He believed that his sleepless nights were devoted to thinking about Frances Leatheby, though they really were quite as much occupied with thoughts of himself. How he haunted the fashionable parts of London on the look-out for that carriage he had first beheld in Paris; how incessantly he found excuses for presenting himself in Mrs. Leatheby's house, incurring thereby the supercilious pity of the servants; how he toiled and waited for hours in promenades, bazars, and balls, to catch a brief interview with his charmer; how slavishly, and meanly, and dishonestly he curried favor with her friends, and the friends of her friends, so as to get cards to the entertainments she was to grace; how he exaggerated every attention she favored him with into a

proof of affection, and every civility she offered to another into unquestionable evidence that she was entirely devoted to that other; how he furnished himself with every new song she sung, till he had such a musical collection as would set up another Cramer and Beale in business; how he was continually being reminded of her by fancy portraits in the print-shops; how he wrote verses on her varied beauties, not in the orthodox and very respectable decasyllabic measure in which, after Pope, he won the prize at Cambridge for the best poem on gunpowder, but in reams of fluent and very irregular lyrics; how he committed these and a hundred and fifty other absurdities, those only can conceive who have the memories of their own early vagaries before them.

If his old father could have witnessed his daily demeanor, it may be questioned whether he would altogether have approved it; certainly he would have learned that, under certain temptations, his boy was capable of running into extravagances of feeling, and also of financial expenditure. For, suddenly, Everitt launched out into a style of living that would have required twice, if not thrice, his allowance of three hundred pounds per annum to support. His boots were discarded as shabby before they ceased to pinch his toes; his hats were, in his morbid eyes, always seedy, and requiring to be replaced by new ones; nothing in the way of habiliments, that all the ingenuity and talent of the best tailors could supply him with, satisfied him for many days; and the sums he laid out in brocaded scarfs, gossamer cravats, and the most filmy kid gloves, would have kept half St. Giles's in bread. Then, as if he had not yet found out sufficient ways for the dissipation of his fortunes, he must take, for his own sole and particular use, the gray mare we have seen him mounted on, off Mr. Coppey's hands, and two or three times a week pay for an "open sesame" to the Italian Opera House.

Prudent family men often caution the young against mar-

rying on insufficient means; they might as well carry their counsel one step farther, and tell them to avoid the expensive amusement of falling in love."

One source of comfort Everitt sadly needed. He wanted an easy, good-natured confidant, whom he could, with safety, have flooded with rhapsodical communications of his sentiments, and the ever-shifting state of his affections; but he had not such friends. There were plenty of men who knew his ambition, many more, indeed, than he was aware of, and very good fun, very *good-natured* fun they made of it; but there was no one nigh whom he felt it prudent to create the sharer of his inmost secrets. Lord Brigden, indeed, more than once tried to insinuate himself into his young friend's confidence; but Everitt started back from the proffered sympathy as if he had been invited to use a bar of red-hot iron as a crutch. Under ordinary circumstances, he would have had recourse to Hugh Falcon; but, unfortunately, a coolness had arisen between him and his friend. To those who study life (as every one professes to do), the fact of a breach between Hugh and Everitt will not be at all surprising, since they were very intimate and sincerely earnest friends; still it may appear a little wonderful, under these circumstances, that they should have quarreled on any thing of graver weight than a dispute at a card-table, or an after-dinner jest, or one of those many ridiculous trifles that, as a rule, cause dissension among close associates.

How it came about can be stated in a few words. Everitt remonstrated with Hugh on his going so often to Isabel's house, saying that, though he had no doubt Hugh would have every consideration for his cousin, he was placing himself in a dangerous position, and one that might cause him much suffering. All things, *except one or two*, being considered, there was nothing improper in such counsel; for Everitt and Hugh had, for years, been in the habit of speaking to each other frankly and unreservedly on all subjects. But there

were reasons that combined to make the latter uneasy under his friend's exhortation; reason No. 1, the subject treated of was the one subject Hugh did not wish to be advised upon; reason No. 2, the counsel given was unpalatable and also good; reason No. 3, Hugh was not in a very amiable humor toward his friend, having, only a day or two before, learned from Emily Allerton that which, for the first time, made him repent having placed Everitt on such familiar terms with his family and domestic connections. So Hugh replied curtly and warmly, and threw out a cruel taunt at Everitt for being so ready to command others, and so slow to control himself. They did not interchange "words of high disdain," but their looks did more; and when they parted, which they did almost immediately, it was to wander about, each by himself, each drawing an unamiable portrait of the other in his mind. When they next met they greeted each other coldly, talked to each other coldly, and in cold silence agreed to avoid each other as much as possible for the future.

Everitt was driven to writing copiously to his father, who not only attentively read the ardent outpourings of his boy's heart, but also replied to them with faithful exactness in the same honest style of faulty orthography and simple affection we have already been introduced to.

But what effective use, as means of conveying sentiment, can a lover make of pens and paper, though they be the best and smoothest?

Everitt's intention, when he declined Lord Brigden's offer, was to avoid his lordship as much as possible for some weeks, till the affair might be to a certain degree obliterated from his mind, and to take especial care not at any time to be drawn into a discussion of the reasons of his refusal. His lordship, however, did not fail to bring him to his side before forty-eight hours had elapsed by sending him a slip of paper, on which was written,

"Come as soon as you can to me. I have a message from F. L. BRIGDEN."

Instantly the prudent resolution was broken, and Everitt, instead of keeping out of his friend's way, was at considerable pains to find him. The reward for his alteration of purpose was the invitation to meet Mrs. Leatheby *and her daughter* at the Opera.

The only allusion Lord Brigden made, in the conversation that passed between them at this meeting, to Everitt's determination not to enter the House of Commons as his lordship's nominee, was only a passing one.

"I shall watch you with more interest now."

"As a curiosity?" inquired Everitt, with a laugh.

"It is not the first or the sixth time I have seen a young man so simple-minded—and they have all run the same course."

"What may that be?"

"They sought *honorable* preferment, as they call it, waited for it, toiled for it, deserved it, but, not winning it, became disappointed men, and actually, to gratify their spleen, made the recantation that once would have earned them success. But we have said enough on this subject; let us drop it."

"What will become of Ardlebridge?"

"I am going into the House from it myself. If I make a penny out of the place, you'll perhaps think better of my principles. Colonel Mosgrave has accepted the Chiltern Hundreds, and my address is already out."

Everitt here took leave of his lordship, and did not see him again till the next Friday night, when, on entering Lady Luscombe's box, the young man was welcomed by the sight of Lord Brigden sitting by the side of Frances Leatheby, and listening attentively to her words. In the background was Mrs. Leatheby, with her cousin, old Major Gabbin, who, in a low monotone, was pouring one continuous stream of scandal *into* the ear of his grave companion.

Frances beckoned Everitt to a vacant seat by her side, saying, "Why were you not here sooner?"

"I did not forget my engagement," Everitt answered.

"Lord Brigden has been offering to bet me any number of dozens of kid gloves that you would."

"I am obliged to him."

"You'll make us shoot each other, if you do not take care," said Lord Brigden, with a grin, which, though conciliating in intention, brought to the recollection of both his hearers his deeds of blood.

Everitt was fond of music, and, after having given and received a few words of chat with Miss Leatheby, he unconsciously became silent, and listened to a stirring air the orchestra was playing, still, however, keeping his eye on the mistress of his dreams.

"I can not allow that; you are positively paying attention to that noise, instead of telling me how you admire it," exclaimed Frances, lightly, rallying him for his silence.

"He thought he was listening to you," said Lord Brigden, dryly, with one of those significant sneers that only he was master of.

Everitt could have seized him by the mustache, and hurled him to perdition.

"There is Miss Haviland in the box almost opposite us, with the crimson head-dress," observed Everitt, putting down the glasses he had raised to his eyes for the purpose of concealing their angry flashes.

"Who is she?" inquired Lord Brigden, affecting ignorance.

"The poetess," said Frances.

"First of our women of genius," put in Everitt, grandly.

"You believe in the existence of such beings. I question if Lord Brigden does."

"Pardon me, you have yourself been at pains to point me

out several, and I have of late made them my special study, and, on the whole, I don't like them."

"You must pay a penalty for that speech by giving us your reason for it on compulsion," said Everitt.

"Ordinary women are the victims of personal vanity, and liberal indulgence in that enables them to be tolerably pure of all other sins; but women of genius are the victims of both personal and intellectual vanity."

"I will not contradict you," observed Frances, with a smile.

"You can't help doing so," murmured Everitt.

"But you must except poor Miss Haviland from your severe sentence, for I am sure you wrong her. Indeed, you do her injustice," continued Frances.

"Why call her *poor?*"

"She is so. She has lost her fortune."

"You should not have told Brigden that; he will despise her more now," Everitt remarked. "He has inexhaustible contempt for ill fortune, preferring little successful men to unsuccessful great ones."

"How much has she lost?"

"Thirty or forty thousand pounds."

"By a religious banker, I suppose."

"She has now only an annuity of three hundred pounds."

"Then she is only imperfectly despicable," rejoined Lord Brigden. "She has not sunk altogether beneath the sympathy of the charitable of decent society."

"You can not commiserate the condition of a complete beggar?" Everitt asked, with a laugh; "for pride would not allow you to have any thing of feeling in common with such a wretch."

"The greatest poets and best writers of the age uphold me. Where a great novelist strips his hero of his property, and reduces him to poverty, the gentleman always is permitted to have a modest sufficiency to retire to, or a substantial

remnant of his once princely estate wherewith to begin the world again with a decent coat and a tolerable horse."

"What admirable nonsense you are talking!" said Everitt.

"And there's some *gorgeous* nonsense to look at," put in Frances, turning her eyes to the stage, over which passed to and fro a pageant of purple, and crimson, and gold, and files of magnificent soldiers treading with muffled feet, so as not to be heard over the soft music of the flutes to which half a hundred dancing girls kept time.

"It is time to leave now," said Julia, in a few minutes. "Mamma, are you not weary with this glittering noise and folly? And I promised Mrs. Ambrose Hill we would be early at her house to-night."

Mrs. Leatheby, who was very patient under her daughter's control, rose quietly at the word of command, inviting her gallant cousin, Major Gabbin, to accompany her.

"And you can have the remaining vacant seat," said Frances to Everitt, who was simple enough to think that her offer was as galling to Lord Brigden as it was the reverse to himself.

"I'll not leave you till your carriage comes up," said Lord Brigden, following the party through the passages.

"You do not know Mrs. Ambrose Hill, do you?" asked Frances, turning half round, as she spoke, from Everitt, whose arm she was leaning on.

"Yes, I do; and she sent me an invitation for to-night, but I shall not avail myself of it. I am too old to dance."

Everitt looked behind him as he said a few words to rally the patriarch on the despondent tone with which he uttered the last part of his speech, but he was too late to see the significant glances that had been exchanged between Lord Brigden and Frances.

Immediately Mrs. Leatheby and her child made their appearance in the crowded drawing-rooms in Eaton Place, the latter was surrounded by her hunters, soliciting the honor of

dancing with her. Tom Millington, of the Guards, with a landed estate worth ten thousand a year, and the ambitious Arthur Cosby, with one hundred and fifty pounds per annum in the Treasury, were only two out of twenty aspirants to Frances's hand for that evening, and for another more important occasion at a future time. But the beautiful creature was not so much bent on giving pleasure to others as on enjoying herself; so she repulsed all the flattering advances made to her by all her devoted servants, with the exception of such as came from Everitt, whom it was her humor especially to honor. Careless of the remarks of hundreds of bitter tongues, and of the regard of wellnigh a thousand watchful eyes, she whirled round with him in every waltz and polka, and in the intervals between these inspiriting dances, walked with him up and down the less frequented rooms, or, seated in a snug out of the way corner, gave herself up to the pleasures of—what, of course, no *right-minded* woman ever indulges in—outrageous flirtation. Tom Millington swore an oath, and, clinching his broad fist in excitement, informed Arthur Cosby that "the girl must be mad;" and Arthur Cosby responded to Tom Millington by asserting of Miss Leatheby's conduct, "it's—disreputable."

"My dear, do keep your eye on Frances. How she is flirting with that young Brookbank!" remarked the old major to Mrs. Leatheby.

"Oh, indeed—is she?" rejoined Mrs. Leatheby, gravely, raising to her eyes a pair of massively-set glasses, as if about to examine the pattern of a table-cloth.

"He's nobody," continued the major—"the son of a younger son of a little baronet no one ever heard of except when—but let that pass. This young man's father is a half-pay navy captain, and has a small annuity from his late wife's family. How this boy makes the appearance he does, I can't guess! What do you know of him?"

"I have the greatest confidence in Frances. She is quite

able to take care of herself," answered the imperturbable Mrs. Leatheby, with a movement of her fan implying that she wished to whisk away the subject.

Never was mother better justified in having confidence in her child.

"This is better than the Opera, with Lord Brigden taking notes of all our words and actions," observed Frances to her partner, when they were resting after a waltz.

"Why do you allow him to be guilty, with impunity, of the impertinences his tongue is continually performing to you?"

"Perhaps he does not go unpunished. So you have declined his offer of Ardlebridge?"

"How did you know he had offered it to me?"

"It was I who told him to do so."

Everitt started and colored with surprise, and, perhaps, gratification also. "Then did you wish me to accept it?"

"I will not say 'yes;' I was desirous that you should have such a chance of distinguishing yourself."

"Are you satisfied with my determination? Do assure me, Miss Leatheby, that you are not disappointed in finding I could resist such a bribe," Everitt said, with an earnestness that was in itself a declaration of his love.

"Do you think nothing could tempt you to change your opinions?"

"Yes, one thing."

"What may that be?"

"Finding that they were erroneous."

Frances smiled as she put her question in another form, "Do you think no earthly temptation could make you act contrary to principle?"

Everitt paused for a few moments, and then answered, modestly, "Whatever the temptation might be, I would strive against it."

"I will put a temptation before you. Suppose you dearly

loved a woman, who was worthy of you (but let us leave her merits, her beauty, her wealth, her devotion to you—it is enough that you love her)—suppose she were to say, 'Everitt Brookbank, I wish to be yours, but your opinions on one important subject differ from mine; I could never be happy with a husband holding your views; be converted by me, and you win me,' What would you say?"

Looking into her dark eyes, Everitt replied distinctly, enunciating each word slowly, to give it the greater force, "If she loved me, she would adopt my opinions, and not require me to adopt hers."

As he uttered these words, Everitt saw Frances's lips work, and her pale cheeks move with agitation. Some hard conflict of feeling was going on within her; he wondered what it was. At last the lovely girl held out her delicate white arm, and, putting her right hand on Everitt's, said,

"Everitt Brookbank, were the world one half as good as you believe it, had men one tithe of your nobility, you would have to ask twice for nothing that you desired. From my inmost heart I admire you! And the sincerity of my words you may see in my daring to utter them."

"Frances, why only admire me? I implore you—love me."

These words were spoken where there were no listeners, and in so low a voice that, even if there had been spies near at hand, they would have gathered up but little of the conversation. Before, however, Everitt had fairly made his petition, and just as the decisive character of the step he had taken fluttered over his consciousness, feet approached, and Mrs. Leatheby's voice was heard calling her child.

"My dear Frances, we must leave now—come away."

"I shall give myself the pleasure of calling on you tomorrow, and will bring you a specimen of the new enamel you expressed a desire to see," Everitt said to Mrs. Leatheby.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Brookbank, that we shall not be

able to see you. I and Frances leave town immediately after an early breakfast for Buckinghamshire."

Everitt turned pale, and stammered out some expression of hope that their absence from town would not be a long one.

"We shall not be much in London till next season," was the answer.

"But we trust you will not quite forget us," put in Frances, with a politeness that cut Everitt's heart to the centre.

Immediately Mrs. Leatheby and Frances had alighted from their carriage and entered their house, they separated, almost without a word, for the night, each retiring to her private apartments. The younger lady, notwithstanding the exertions of the night, was not ready for sleep. What little fatigue she suffered was removed by the warm cocoa and milk that was simmering by the fire in the boudoir we have already obtained admittance to, a cup of which beverage she accepted from her maid's hand, and commenced sipping directly she had taken a reclining position on the sofa. After a few minutes' rest she rose from the couch, and, having exacted a few services from her attendant, dismissed her from duty till the morning.

"Now I will give an hour to setting my accounts right," Frances said to herself, when, her maid sent off to bed, she returned from her bed-room to the pretty sitting-room, her ball-dress replaced by a loose dressing-gown of delicate material and make.

Crossing the apartment, she approached a slight rose-wood book-case, the shelves of which contained an elegant selection of the best European writers in *belles-lettres*. Having pulled this piece of furniture aside, she put her hand to the wall, when instantly the door of a secret closet flew back, and revealed to sight a large, high, iron fire-proof chest, such as are used in offices for the safe keeping of important documents. Taking the key from her pocket, she turned the lock,

opened the heavy door of the upper compartment of the chest, took therefrom two vellum-bound books and a file of letters, and placed them on the table. Then, having shut back the iron door, refixed the spring compartment in the wall, and placed the book-case exactly as it was before, she seated herself before the accounts, and was soon entirely occupied with the study of them.

Tick, tick, went the ormolu time-piece on the mantel-shelf; once, twice, thrice, four times it struck the quarters, and still Frances sat in the brilliantly-lighted boudoir, with knit brows, eager eyes, quick hands, casting up sums requiring for their correct solution an intimate acquaintance with compound interest and discount, glancing rapidly over letters concerning various business transactions, referring to old sheets in the ledgers, and making entries in new ones. Truly, as Mrs. Leatheby said, Frances was "quite able to take care of herself."

"That is all satisfactory," she said at last, closing the ledgers and re-filing the papers, with the exception of a few which she committed to the fire. "Since the commencement of the year, within six months, I have clearly made by my own talents for business no less a sum than twelve hundred pounds, and this I have done by the use I have made of the one fifth part of my property, that is in my own hands, on which, besides the three and a half per cent. interest, I have gained TWELVE HUNDRED POUNDS in six months!!! When will my trustees, with their mean notions, do as much?"

Having uttered this short speech of self-approbation, the girl rose once more, returned the account books to their secret abode, and then, having restored the apartment to its customary state, again took possession of the chair she had occupied when writing. For a few minutes she was silent, as if in meditation, and then leaning forward, with her elbows on the table, and her hands supporting her head by being put

as a prop under her chin, she gave utterance to the following strange soliloquy, the flashing of her eyes and the action of her pale face giving emphasis to the words:

"No, I will not be weak. I will not sacrifice so many chances of substantial happiness for one gratification. To do so would be imprudent; and why should not I be prudent? why should not I regulate my life so as to extract the greatest possible amount of gratification from the advantages of my position? Men are applauded for such wise conduct, they are trained to excel in it, and are esteemed great or little just as they profit by it. Why should it be wrong in a woman?

"He can not be mine, for he will not descend to me. I know he is above me, and I have done my utmost to make him my equal, but he is not to be overcome. I admire him —his great physical strength; his fondness for manly exercises; his frank, generous, and yet easy temper; his commanding figure; his soft, winning voice; his clear intellects —I admire him—I love him. But, say I married him, how could I bear him, after the first few months of rapture, to find out, piece by piece, the difference between him and me? Now he adores me; my beauty, and wit, and accomplishments have seized on his imagination, and he has pictured me to his mind a very goddess! Shall I unite myself to him, and have him first chilled with horror as he reads me, and then see him draw away from me in cold contempt? and live to have him prove the tyrant of my days, although the dupe of my artifice? Never.

"And yet, why should I surrender at once all the pleasure of his society? There are some who call me without feeling: how much they know of me! Is there one chord in his poetical nature that I can not touch? and does a note come from that strangely cunning instrument that is not answered by me? Love, pity, compassion, long-suffering, patient endurance—I have plenty of them; but where are the fit ob-

jects? My eyes fill with tears when I see him believing in such a world of slaves."

Before her features had sunk back into rest after this passionate harangue, she rose from her chair and crossed the room to the windows. As she did so, she accidentally saw her likeness reflected in a mirror. The image arrested her steps, and she paused to gaze at it. Flushed with excitement, and brilliant with that indescribable light that so generally illuminates the human face after midnight, when the frame is not worn with toil, she was startled at the lovely image that stood before her.

Apparently the sight of her own beauty softened her, for the tears started to her eyes.

Having drawn aside the curtains, she drew back the shutters, and threw open the windows, and saw the dawn of the summer morning, and heard the grateful birds chirp to the coolness and the awful silence.

"Oh God," she cried, sinking on her knees, and extending her hand to the gray heavens, "make me better or make me worse."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PUNCH BOWL.

A VERY feverish time Everitt passed, when, after smoking a cigar in the Temple Gardens, he ascended to his chambers and crept into his bed just as Frances Leatheby at the open window beheld the breaking of another day.

Whether his declaration had been construed by her as meaning all he intended; whether, in that case, she would give him a favorable reply; whether, supposing she was not so ripe to give herself up to him, his rash avowal of his passion would cause her to seclude herself from his advances, and render vain all his hopes and strivings—here were ques-

tions calculated to make his pillow a restless one. Worn and pale, as a dissipated student might appear, he took his seat the next day to go through the form of his late and solitary breakfast; and dull and heavy he felt, though the warm breezes of the pure morning fluttered in from the gardens, when a double rap at the outer door made him pitch aside the newspaper he had been staring listlessly at, and jump to his feet.

Another twenty seconds, and in came the artistic clerk with a letter—rose-tinted envelope—her seal. He tore it open, even under the eyes of his professional servitor, and was deep in its contents before the door was reclosed between them.

"Dear Everitt,

"I can not leave London without writing you my adieux, as circumstances will not allow us to wish each other farewell in person. Do not pain yourself, however, by supposing that our separation is to be for long; for, if I can influence mamma's movements, we shall meet again before Christmas. It provokes me to know how many friends we have whom we must visit, and also that I must submit to be dragged away from dear England to the Continent during the autumn.

"I thought of you, as women alone can think, when they love, of those most dear, last night; and I do not blush to tell you that, when I prayed for myself, I prayed for you too. To ask protection for myself, to sue for strength to enable me to resist the cunning lures the very blessings of my fortune surround me with, was natural, and very meet and right; but why did I implore heavenly guidance and care for you? Was it because I prized your goodness as part of myself, and so trembled for it as if it partook of my kindness?

"Dear Everitt, you last night made a petition to me. Have I said enough in answer to it? I am writing from

my heart, as I will ever address you, and therefore I do not fear your charging me with unworthy caprice and inconsistency in laying upon you the command I am about to give you. *Forget that you ever uttered that request.* I do not ask you to forget me, or to learn to think of me less affectionately. I do not require you to lay aside a hope that it makes me happy to know you cherish. All I want of you is to act and be toward me as if that request had not been made, and not to urge me at present for a binding reply. We have not known each other long, and the time we have passed in each other's society has not been under circumstances best calculated to enable you to form a correct estimate of me. You have only seen me under the fair sky, when surrounded by all that is beautiful. There is a darker side to the picture. Oh, before I see you again, let me efface it, so that it may never be seen by you. Is it cruel to you, as it is presumptuous in myself to say, I will not be yours till I am in some degree worthy of you?

"I wish I could give you leave to write to me, but that I can not do. FRANCES."

Everitt read this precious letter many times before he was satisfied with perusing it. Such gladness as he felt in his heart he had never known before. It was the joy of victory, but altogether different from the exultation of his boyish triumph at school and college, though most men who have tried both have found the pleasures derived from those little successes which mark opening life more sweet and intoxicating than those extracted from the grander victories of mature years and prolonged exertion. Wait? he could wait. Forget? well, at least he could ask again, as if he had forgotten. Poor fellow! the gladness of his heart rained forth from his eyes, as, having thrown himself at full length on the sofa, he in imagination clasped to his breast that rare woman who gave a dignity even to his own miserable self.

Everitt, much as he liked the society of women, had not had much experience in them. His knowledge of them was not incorrect as it regarded the best, but it was the knowledge of a poet, who had made his acquaintance with them in books rather than in the world. He had no sisters, and can scarcely be said to have known his mother; and unmarried men without such familiar companions of the fireside, under ordinary circumstances, are as ignorant of the softer sex as soldiers who have served only in Hyde Park are of military affairs. The vicious think all women like the worst and most heartless they have been brought in contact with; the chivalric and pure-minded make them better than the best; and Everitt was of the latter class.

But love-spasms, like all other convulsions, do not last whole days through without alleviation; the constitutional tendency may remain, and the disease may be unchecked; but, though remedies may not soothe, the violence of the attack brings in its train the relief of exhaustion. So, at about half past four, Mr. Everitt Brookbank found himself mentally calm and bodily hungry; and, finding himself so, he determined to make his toilet without delay, and at five o'clock to present himself in the hall of his inn, and there to get some dinner.

From the hour of five to that of eight, our friend spent his time very agreeably and profitably to himself; firstly, in consuming a good but not luxurious repast in the hall, where he was received by his companions (with some amount of sly humor) as a stranger; and, secondly, in smoking a pipe and enjoying a cup of coffee in a friend's rooms. These important pieces of business being transacted, the thought came to Everitt's mind how he should amuse himself for the remainder of the evening. Perhaps the reader feels it was the young man's duty to return to his solitary chambers, and therein delight himself with reminiscences of Frances. But, though ladies are to be found who, in their simplicity, believe that

their devoted servants, through all the days intervening between the day of acceptance and that which sees the consummation of their bliss, do verily think of nothing else but the benign angels they are respectively about to lead to the altar, and though many respectable gentlemen, remarkable for their modesty and freedom from egotism, are struck with astonishment when their ladies express a desire for other objects of interest than their lordly masters' comforts, yet it may be safely stated that gentle sentiment no more delights in solitary confinement than a really powerful mind finds satisfaction in the consideration of only one topic.

Acting in accordance with this opinion, Everitt, on quitting the chambers in which he had been relishing his filthy tobacco, walked down to the vicinity of the Adelphi, and, in a modest and unclean by-street, entered the door of the Calisthenic School of Arms. It was the evening on which the club for the cultivation of athletic accomplishments to which Everitt belonged met in the grand hall of the Calisthenic School. After passing over the street threshold, Everitt walked along a dark passage for about twenty feet, then ascended a flight of broken stairs dimly lighted with gas, then descended a flight not lighted at all, then groped his way along twenty feet of passage, then climbed a long, narrow staircase (that ran, aided in finding its way by an occasional jet of gas, up four stories), and finally arrived at the door of the room he desired to enter.

The Calisthenic Hall was a huge, black, savage-looking place. A stranger might be pardoned, on his first admittance, for fancying that it was a vast vault blown up to amalgamation with an immense loft, or a cold, immense, haunted garret, of unearthly magnitude, depressed into intimate relationship with a gloomy cellar. Rather brilliantly was this ragged apartment lighted with immense spouts of flame, soaring upward from bars of iron depending from the ceiling; the walls were adorned with sketches, of a certain

degree of merit, of gallant gentlemen fighting to the death with swords; gallant gentlemen pinking the hearts and chopping off the limbs of opponents; victorious gallant gentlemen looking as if they had done it, and fallen gallant gentlemen lying at full length—very dead and stiff indeed; and, lastly, to conclude this general description, there were in the hall upward of a dozen gentlemen who, in thin leather jackets, with their right limbs guarded with pads, with their faces concealed by iron fencing-masks, and armed in their right hands with thick basket-handled ash sticks, fought vigorously in couples, striking their blows vehemently and with right good earnest. It may be well to state that the club was confined to gentlemen of the sedentary profession of the law, and its most distinguished members were May-Fair exquisites, who had, in the drawing-rooms they adorned, a reputation for being capable of no exertion without fainting immediately after it. As to waltzing, or riding, or doing any thing that required physical energy, these delicate creatures would sooner die than attempt them.

In a few minutes, one of the duels coming to an end, and a gentleman who had had two sticks broken on his shoulders that night thinking he had been favored with enough of such treatment, and consequently retiring, Everitt was challenged by the untired man who had destroyed the two sticks just mentioned to an encounter. The invitation was readily accepted, and, in another minute, Everitt, having slipped on the trappings of war, was adding, by means of his wooden sword, to the clashing and rattling that constituted a music—enlivening and appropriate to the occasion. It would have startled many of Everitt's fair acquaintance to have seen him striking away, lunging out and retreating, giving and taking blows that embossed their likenesses on the skin in black and blue—all in the way of play! Charley Cripps, the little fellow who is always sculling up at Putney, and is so proud of his muscle and condition that, in society, he is continually

holding up his legs and imploring his friends to pinch him if they can, visited the Calisthenic one evening with the intention of surprising the club; but, somehow, his muscle did not accomplish all he anticipated, and it never dropped in on the association again.

Every now and then the fencers stopped for breathing, and to refresh themselves with draughts of beer, and in some cases whiffs from short pipes, and then, like giants refreshed, returned to the strife. It was considerably past eleven o'clock when Everitt desisted from the exercise, divested himself of his mask and leather coverings, arranged his collar and cravat, and hair, and quitted the school of arms.

"I must have some supper after that," said he, when once more he stood in the street. "Two or three small chops and some cool stout will be appropriate comforters for me at this crisis. Where shall I have them? Oh! 'tis Punch Bowl night. I'll go there."

And forthwith acting on so wise a resolution, Mr. Everitt Brookbank turned his steps in the direction of the Punch Bowl.

The magnificent club-houses of Pall Mall and St. James's have by no means put an end to the rough-and-ready coffee-room clubs of Dr. Johnson's time, though doubtless many superficial antiquarians of our posterity will fall into the error of imagining that the scholars and gentlemen of the Victorine Age did not condescend to cultivate the social virtues in modest and unpretending taverns.

Of the numerous hotel clubs that exist in London, the Punch Bowl is, and for many years has been, one of the most attractive. In the course of its existence it has migrated from one locality to another at least a dozen times, now abiding on the north and now on the south side of the Strand and Fleet Street. At the period of which this history treats it was rendering illustrious a small hotel in Essex Street, Strand. Its history is obscure. Who founded it no one

can exactly say, though there are traditions vaguely cherished by venerable gray-headed members that Sir Walter Scott smiled on its birth, and Lord Brougham himself has in it often consumed Welsh rarebit and strong whisky punch after his midnight toil has been brought to a close. One of the remarkable features of the institution is, that it can not be said to have any laws. Whether the society has any object further than genial indulgence—whether any qualification is required in gentlemen before they can be admitted members—how new members are elected, are points veiled in uncertainty. There is a general impression among the veteran associates just alluded to that the club was originally formed to define the word "Epigram;" but no one can remember that topic to have been systematically pursued on the evening of meeting, though it is a favorite effort of humor on the part of the old stagers to inquire whose turn it is to read the paper on Epigrams. It is also allowed at least to be probable that the rule of the club is, that none but authors, artists, and actors should be admitted members; yet some of the most regular and popular attendants of the meetings are perfectly innocent of art in any form. A novice sometimes asks for information on one of these constitutional points, when he is safe to be immediately referred to the chairman, who will explain it all to him. This is great fun; for though, theoretically, the Punch Bowl has a chairman, a deputy chairman, and twelve committee-men, for the due management of its affairs, in actual fact, these officers have either never been chosen and installed, or have long since sunk into privacy. Two fundamental laws, however, are acknowledged by all members. No. 1. That the club meet once a week. No. 2. That the evening's sitting commence at eight P.M., and terminate before twelve; which latter regulation is adhered to by the company assembling at about midnight, and separating shortly after daybreak.

On a full night the Punch Bowl is a reunion worthy the

attention of any one desirous of becoming acquainted with London society. Although it is without laws for the exclusion of objectionable candidates for admission, its proceedings are always harmonious; and, from every member taking heed not to abuse his privilege of introducing friends by bringing in the less commendable of his acquaintance, it is a remarkable instance of a company comprising very different ranks of society in which free discussion is carried on upon all topics, and perfect good fellowship at the same time maintained. Historians, poets, novelists, successful lawyers, artists, parliamentary reporters, young men calling themselves law-students and amusing themselves with what they term life, old actors, and occasionally a few men of a very superior social position to what any man who makes his fortune by his intelligence can in England hope to arrive at, are the constituent parts of the club, so well pleased to talk and argue, and wrangle amid clouds of smoke over deviled steaks and reeking tumblers of grog.

Having found a seat in the rather crowded room, Everitt requested a waiter to bring him his supper without delay, and then, having responded to the nods and other greetings of his friends, opened his ears to catch the conversation that flew about from nearly half a hundred speakers.

In those days the Punch Bowl was divided into three great sections. No. 1. The gentlemen who believed in the past. No. 2. The gentlemen who believed in the future. No. 3. The gentlemen who did not believe in any thing. No one but Everitt seemed to have any faith in the poor present; the few who abstained from pouring contempt and ridicule on it were uninfluential members of party No. 2, and by them the existing time was spoken of as a useful, but an unworthy entrance to a magnificent temple. The pet observation of these liberal individuals was, "Unquestionably we are in a transitionary state."

In numbers the three divisions were very nearly equal,

but division No. 1, the Feudality party, made by far most noise. The creed of this sect it would be difficult exactly to state, for it possessed an infinite number of dogmas not in every respect consistent with each other. The Feudality orators believed in "blood," or what they were pleased to call "race;" they deemed modern civilization a detestable and degrading social condition, putting the British baron at great disadvantage, and allowing a vast deal too much liberty to the base serf. Over Manchester, Birmingham, and Sheffield phenomena, whether those phenomena were in the shape of exquisite wares and fabrics such as the earth never before produced, or in the less agreeable form of starving and discontented multitudes, they heaved deep and affecting sighs; the productions of the silk mills, brilliant cutlery, and mighty steam-engines were only the bawbles with which Satan lured away an idolatrous and fickle people from the worship of the feudal lord and the simplicity that once characterized the British race; and the luckless millions who in starvation called on the malicious demon, named Mechanical Industry, to supply them according to promise with work, and scanty food for work's pay, were unknown in previous ages, when every rood maintained its man, and when there were no famines reducing multitudes upon multitudes to stay their hunger with grass—no sweating sicknesses, no plagues cutting down whole towns and villages of unfortunate wretches gasping out their death-breathings without the support of nurses and physicians.

The times were out of joint; how to renovate them was the question; and that problem was solved in loud cries for the repeal of the Reform Bill, and the summary dismissal from the kingdom, either by emigration or gunpowder, of all manufacturers, and that despicable surplus population dependent on mill-owners for employment. Do this, restore the feudal system, kick shopkeepers into submission, and make it a capital offense to call a laborer by any other name than

"peasant," and then some slight advances would have been made in the right direction.

In their love of the past, old families—to all men objects of interest, to all poetic minds objects of reverence—occupied much of their attention. But they were not content with regarding a few of those splendid houses whose children have from time immemorial retained those marks of greatness which adorned their first progenitors; but they mingled up in inexplicable confusion their veneration for noble men long dead, and noble deeds long since accomplished, with a peddling printer's devil's admiration for the patents of the Heralds' College. They were ready to prove to you that human genius could not be found apart from aristocratic descent. The sublime intellect was never imparted to any but the offspring of lords.

Cromwell received his talent from the Stuarts, from one branch of which family there is *no doubt* he was descended. William of Orange would not have got the better of James the Second if his mother had not been a Stuart princess. Chatham would not have become England's mighty commoner if his grandmother had not been a descendant of the Regent Murray. Nelson was enabled to win his battles by the blood of the Sucklings and Walpoles he carried in his veins. Byron derived his poetic genius from his ancient lineage. Shakspeare would never have been a poet if his mother had not been Mary Arden (of that ancient—and remarkably talented?—Warwickshire family), or if he himself had not been born a gentleman entitled to use arms. Prior would never have achieved fame if he had not been, perhaps, a son of Lord Dorset.

These cases were enough to establish the law; and, that done, it followed as a matter of course that every clever man supposed to be of plebeian extraction was really the offspring, without knowing it, of the loins of the founder of a great family, either with bend sinister or without. The cases,

therefore, of Luther, Wolsey, Locke, Watts, Burns, Schiller, Goethe, and all other master minds, *nominally* the product of the people, it was impossible to regard in any other light than instances of "the principle of blood asserting itself!".

It was a little remarkable that the most energetic of these applauders of feudality and "blood" were men beneath the average stature and with weakly constitutions, and who were, moreover, not in the remotest way connected with the august system they so enthusiastically admired. They were just the powerless mortals who, in the days when physical force carried the day, would have been brained in the very first fray they entered; and, by extraction, they would have found it difficult to show themselves entitled to better fare than the horse-corn with which the serf filled himself. Yet, when they harangued on the dignities and glories of feudalism, and the filthiness of Brummagem lucre-worship, they were convinced they were arguing their own cause; in defending the memory of the old barons, they were actuated by a desire to place *themselves* in a right light before the world. They conceived of themselves as feudal chieftains. It never struck them that, had they lived in the eleventh century, they, with their love of jest, and quips, and mirth, instead of being *littérateurs* with ten guineas a week on the best journals, would have, in all probability, been employed as domestic fools, and been well whipped whenever they uttered a really smart thing against their superiors. It never occurred to them to picture themselves in the ignoble positions of feudal life; but, making a sketch of that epoch, with the aid of Sir Walter Scott, and an uninquiring belief in the beauties of the monkish chroniclers, they called up before themselves a moated castle, with warder and venerable seneschal, knights and gentlemen-at-arms riding along on generous steeds, and clad in bright and gleaming steel, the abbot and the devout priest, the peasants looking up to their great lord as their father, widows looking up to him as their protector, orphans looking up to him as

their benefactor and friend; and ever this perfect baron, this ideal of feudal heroism, magnificent in physical development, in mental capacity, and moral endowments, was the projected self of the artist!

In the present, mean arts could gain high places; in the past, honor came only to the noble, and then for noble deeds. Falsehood, chicanery, avarice, were the ever active vices of the utilitarian present; in the past there were no lying tongues, no plotting rogues, no traitors. In the past lay that Golden Age poetry had ever delighted in contemplating. Indeed, the past had but one fault, and that was its inability to appreciate the loveliness, the fervor, and refined intellect of the Hebrew race.

These upholders of the past were men for the most part whom no superficial observer of mankind, having regard either to their social position, their extraction, or their studies, would deem as likely to entertain a warm affection for the Middle Ages. Their acquaintance with the history of the epoch and institutions they extolled was not great. Nor did they take pains to increase the depth and soundness of their information concerning them. Ambitious journalists, in most cases without having gone through any systematic education at all, confined their reading almost entirely to that division of literature which commences with Dryden and ends with Dr. Johnson. With the writings of these two great men, their contemporaries, and those intervening between them, they had a respectable acquaintance. But with this field of scholarship they were content. One or two of them had achieved a smattering of the classics, and proclaimed their erudition by inserting in their newspaper articles scraps from Juvenal and Horace, which, perhaps, had most weight with those readers who were unable to construe them; but as a rule, Latin and Greek were held in little esteem by the fraternity. In the monkish chronicles they were scarcely at all read. All modern science they held in perfect disdain;

astronomy, moral philosophy, chemistry, political economy, geology, and all the ologies, with the exception of archæology, they regarded with a contempt such as is nowadays generally entertained for alchemy and belief in witchcraft. And yet they were bright, sparkling fellows, many of them with a vast and varied fund of anecdotes of the court scandals during the reigns of Anne and her immediate successors, and with great power to fasten the epigrammatic jokes of that period on whatever conversation happened to be carried on in their presence.

As this party was composed of men who had little reason to look back on the past with self-complacency, so the advocates of the future, the "good time coming" boys, were mostly cadets of ancient families, and might have been expected to regard no centuries as so lovely as those dim ones in the history of which nothing was clear but the honors of their noble ancestors.

"Did you read Lord Bragley's speech? What an exhibition it was!" cried a Radical editor to Henry Lendleton, as Everitt was finishing his supper.

"He flew into a royal passion," exclaimed a second.

"And concluded by disolving into tears," put in a third.

"What are his politics?" asked a young gentleman who was commencing life in London as an Oxford graduate and a Temple student.

"A Conservative," responded the Radical editor, curtly, and with a glance of contempt at the ignorant inquirer.

"One does not like to see an English peer in such an ignominious mess. If he was unable to make a telling defense, he might at least have maintained a dignified silence," observed a fifth speaker.

"What could you expect? Creation, 1794. You can't pass his cab in Regent Street without smelling the ink of his patent," answered Henry Lendleton.

Henry Lendleton was a leader of the Feudality party, and

had written two or three novels proving that all peers of old blood were perfect Christians, and that no opulent manufacturer could by any possibility be other than a vile wretch, combining the worst qualities of the heartless tyrant and the cringing slave.

"Come, come, don't be so hard on new creations; the oldest were new once. And 'tis a part of your creed, Lendleton, that aristocracy does not mean the peerage, but gentlemen of honorable descent. Now Lord Bragley's blood is the oldest in the kingdom," Everitt said, as he pushed away his plate, just before taking a deep draught from a tankard of foam-crowned stout.

"What do you mean by 'the aristocracy?'" demanded the Radical editor.

"To define the meaning of words on the spur of the moment is no easy task. Suppose you tell me what you understand by the term 'the people' that is everlastingly on your lips. When you have done that, I shall be ready with my answer," replied Henry Lendleton, to whom the question had been put.

"Oh, '*the people*,' as you use the term, means every one beneath the social condition of him who employs it; but you're evading me. What do you mean by 'the aristocracy?'"

"Lord Eldon understood by it all men who were either members of the House of Peers, or very great capitalists," cried Everitt, aloud, so as to be heard above the uproar which now began to be great.

"Capital. Very good. *That I* can understand," answered the editor, who added sarcastically, in a low voice, to his next neighbor, a man of kindred sentiments, "And that being the case, by all means let us sacrifice every thing to the aristocracy."

"The definition is absurd, and worthy the son of a retail dealer in coal," exclaimed Henry Lendleton.

"Give us a better," exclaimed two or three voices.

"A school of manners," suggested a thoughtful man, of very gentlemanly exterior, who had not spoken before.

The remark elicited cries of "good, good," from several different parts of the room.

"Lord Eldon was a plebeian by birth, a lawyer by profession, and a tradesman by nature," said Henry Lendleton, resuming his attack on the great Lord-chancellor.

"He was a Conservative," a distant voice exclaimed.

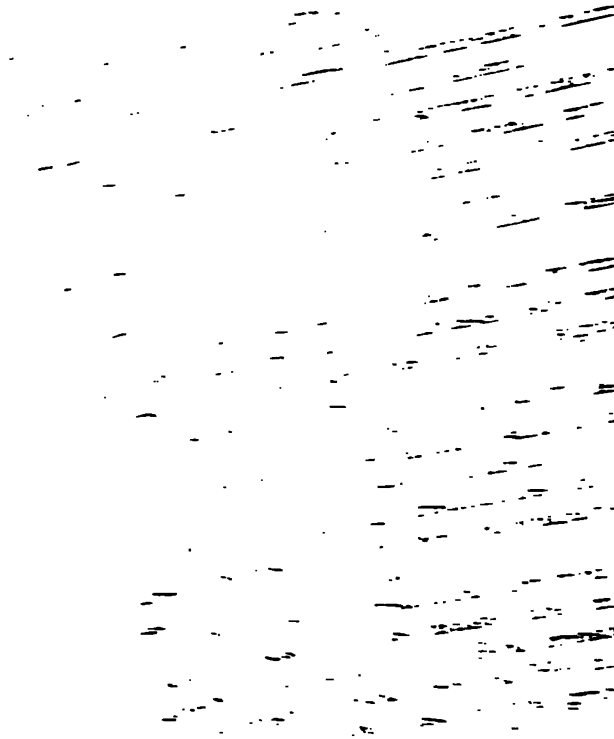
"Pish!" replied Lendleton, contemptuously; "what do you mean by a Conservative?"

"I'll give you a description of one," returned the voice, its owner springing to his legs, and taking a somewhat oratorical attitude. "Here is my man; he is dead. His thought by day and his dream by night was to uphold what he called the Constitution—that indefinable compound of principles and expedients, that to him was as sacred as the commands of Holy Writ. Whoever approached to lay his hands on that ark, whether he came to blot out a cruel statute, or to mitigate a commercial restriction, or to disfranchise a corrupt borough, or to break down a religious disability, was his enemy. The law, as it stood, was his palladium, yet no one was more ready to make the natural course of justice give place to the suspensions of the Constitution. But in his mind this was to preserve the Constitution. To lop off a limb was life to the Constitution; to infuse new blood was death. It has been truly observed that he confounded every abuse that surrounded the throne, or grew up within the precincts of the altar, with the institutions themselves—'alike the determined enemy of all who would either invade the institution or extirpate the abuse.'"

Cries of "hear, hear!" "bravo!" "well spoken!" made a very general and loud applause as the speaker sat down.

"Well done!" said Hugh Falcon, entering the room, having listened to the oration on the staircase.





sarcastically. "His respect for antiquity does not extend beyond the boundary of the feudal system."

"What was the patriarchal life but an exquisitely beautiful feudal system?" asked Lendleton.

A pause followed, whereupon a novitiate of the Feudality party seized the ear of the house, and repeated,

> "Nobles and heralds, by your leave,
> Here lies what once was Matthew Prior,
> The son of Adam and of Eve;
> Can Bourbon or Nassau go higher?"

"And blockheads think," added the novitiate, with a disdainful curl of his lip, after reciting the verse, "that a sentiment which has triumphed over the ridicule of Prior can be crushed by the efforts of their stupidity."

A slight titter rose at this essay on the part of the novitiate.

"You may argue in the same way in favor of avarice and licentiousness, which are still rampant, though Juvenal attacked them with all the vehemence and power of satire he could command; or you might, by the same reasoning, defend sin, which is not *crushed*, though our Saviour came into the world to triumph over it," remarked an elder to the novitiate.

"Oh yes," responded the youth, unabashed, and lighting a cigar, "we know one's words can easily be twisted, and one's arguments perverted."

"You ask for a tradition," cried Hugh Falcon; "I answer, 'the British Constitution.' You dare not laugh at that; and yet what is it but a tradition of our forefathers? That it is admirable, the production of the wisdom of ages, that all patriots ought to unite in guarding it from attack, from within and without, are traditions from our fathers, and traditions dear to Conservatism."

"And to us," exclaimed a Futurity-man.

"To you?" responded Hugh, with affected contempt. "To you, who never rest unless you are preaching up a new Constitution?"

"Poor old England!" croaked Lendleton. "You may do what you like, but you will never restore her to what she has been. Let us admit that the Constitution is not without the defects of age. Indeed, a multitude of ills press on the venerable existence, not, indeed, threatening it with immediate extinction, but rendering it incumbent upon us to apply palliatives. But how would you deal with an old man whose glorious prime had vanished, and who was laboring under the incipient difficulties of gout, asthma, dropsy, and decay of nervous energy? Would you expose him to the cold, or compel him to take immense quantities of bodily exercise? Would you cure the palsy of his limbs by cutting them off? or hope to restore him to youth by chopping him up, and throwing the mince into a caldron? Would you not rather prescribe gentle stimulus, generous diet, and especial attention to physical comfort? Would you not supply him with crutches, easy couches, and all the mechanical supports his infirmity asked for? Out of reverence for his past career, and with the desire to retain on earth as long as possible the oracle of his wisdom, his experience, and his tried judgment, would you not have recourse to every means likely to prolong existence, or, at least, to mitigate the pains of death?"

"And if you knew," said Everitt, taking up the string of questions as Lendleton paused, "that this venerable man was so constructed that, by due attention to certain requirements of his nature, decay might forever be warded off, would you neglect to pay that attention? And if, from negligence and the evil treatment of his children, his pulses had begun to run tardy, and his brain to be sluggish and apathetic, would you not, on being assured that new blood, young vigor, and fresh life could be infused in him, exert yourself to restore him to his pristine powers and loveliness?

"You and your friends claim the distinction of being known as Conservatives, and I believe fully in the honesty and the foolishness of your zeal. As long as you keep any

thing, you care not what it is, whether it be virtue or vice, the precious diamond, or the most noisome dirt. We, your opponents, also are Conservatives, but of a different sort, with something more of discrimination than characterizes your worship for old things. Don't you know what Carlyle says? 'It is true, all goes by approximation in this world; with any not insupportable approximation we must be patient. There is a noble conservatism as well as an ignoble. Would to Heaven, for the sake of conservatism itself, the noble alone were left, and the ignoble, by some kind, severe hand, were ruthlessly lopped away, forbidden evermore to show itself!' You are very fond of pining for the past, mourning over the degeneracy, the meanness, the want of purpose of these days. You sneer at all that is going on around you, and whine out 'cui bono?' at every fresh display of human activity, and ingenuity, and devotion to objects beyond the narrow circle of sensual pleasures. 'What is the good of science? what is the good of social reform? what is the good of clothing and feeding the poor? the earth is still a wild, inhospitable desert. Give us back the days of chivalry, the knight with his religious ardor, and his ennobling admiration of woman! Then we would be up and doing!' This is your cry.

"I tell you, if you had lived in the past, you of this unhappy temperament, instead of being the men of action you picture yourselves, you would have sat by the road side, allowing the armed companies to ride by, you yourselves being content to grin cynically at such mad enthusiasm. Your song would then have been, 'What's the good of all this dashing about over the rough country in heavy armor? What's all this cant about woman? Lady Margery made a slip last week—pooh! and these are the angels we are to fight for!' And, having moaned out this, you would have dragged your dyspeptic bodies home to the abbey, or castle, or homestead, where you were allowed to shelter your shorn

heads. Since you fail to perceive the idea of the epoch you actually live in, why are we to credit you would have been more discerning and more healthy-minded in a preceding one? You plume yourself on your devotion to the past or contempt for the present, imagining they prove singular originality of intellect on your part. But your views are, and ever have been, popular with the timid and unenergetic. You belong to a morbid growth, the oldest and most prolific of all that mental pathology treats of."

Everitt's outpouring, which he made standing, was received with many demonstrations of applause. He was popular in the assembly, the Futurity-men respecting him for his manly freedom from the sentiment they were especially adverse to; the Feudality party finding excuses for the wildness of his views in their regard for his old and unquestionably honorable descent; and both divisions uniting in admiring his high-bred style and genial disposition. But, like many "young men of the right sort, with something in them," Everitt, in his opinions, stood very much alone. Hope had advocates, and Regret had many adherents, but he, with his warm love of the kind hearts that surrounded him, his enthusiastic admiration of the many rarely-endowed minds that in this generation are laboring in all departments of thought, his appreciation of the beauties among which he dwelt, and his belief in the high purpose and moral dignity of the great mass of his fellow-men, was wondered at, and applauded, and distrusted, as practical men ever wonder at, and applaud, and distrust a poet.

"Invective tells well when Brookbank makes use of it; and no one doubts his powers of ridicule, by which he can make what he dislikes appear absurd, and that which contradicts his assertions even hateful. But, just now, we should thank him for argument, and not sarcasm. In what does this present of his excel the past? Let him give us a reason for his affection," observed one of Everitt's opponents.

"Love has only one reason—'that it is,'" put in, mystically, one of the members who believed in nothing.

"What can be advanced for the present?" reiterated the questioner.

"It was 'the good time coming' of the hopeful of ages long dead; and centuries hence it shall be an heroic past," replied the non-believer in any thing. "In the year 3000 A.D. Joseph Hume shall be illustrious, and Hudson a divinity. Is this nothing?"

"Have you faith in it yourself?"

"I? I am a philosopher."

"I don't understand you."

"The philosophic mind is ever ready to believe in any thing and every thing, but continues to believe in nothing."

"It will be easier for me to answer to your question if you will point to your most admired era of the past, so that we may compare it with the present," said Everitt, at length replying to his interrogator.

The interrogator was staggered, for his sentiment had never incited him to look much into historic facts, and he, consequently, was not prepared to state accurately what portion of Britain's career he so especially admired, or to tell what was the position of the country at any mediæval period.

"Think," said Everitt. "Review the different reigns, and point me out a fifty years before the eighteenth century so free from foreign wars, domestic insurrections, popular violence, tyranny on the part of rulers, ignorance on the part of the people, pestilence and famine, as the last fifty; and when you have made up your mind that it is an impossibility to do so, reflect on the rapid advances that have been made in the latter portion of the last half century."

A laugh of derision came from the Feudality party.

"My dear Brookbank, remember that you are talking of England, which, Russia excepted, is a hundred years behind

any other European country," said Gruddlebut, with a smile of amusement.

Gruddlebut was sincere in what he said: it was his firm conviction that the country to which he belonged was a scandal to humanity. In painting, architecture, science, literature, political liberty, France and Austria were far ahead of us; Italy and Spain slightly so. This was the one idea, or set of ideas, that Gruddlebut worked on, and most successfully too; for, by traducing the national character in acrimonious articles, he managed to form a connection with, and an income out of, every newspaper of influence in London.

"Never mind. I am talking only of England as she is now, compared with what she was."

"Go to your history, my dear fellow. Have you ever read Gildas?" asked Lendleton, in a compassionate voice, having himself never read a line of the author, and being, in truth, ignorant of his date.

"Yes; and so lately that I remember a passage well enough to recite it to you," answered Everitt; and he immediately proceeded to spout the passages of Gildas's Latin which Dr. Giles has translated:

"'Britain has kings, but they are tyrants; she has judges, but unrighteous ones; generally engaged in plunder and rapine, but always preying upon the innocent; whenever they exert themselves to avenge or protect, it is sure to be in favor of robbers and criminals; they have an abundance of wives, yet are they addicted to fornication and adultery; they are ever ready to take oaths, and as often perjure themselves; they make a vow, and almost immediately act falsely; they make war, but their wars are against their countrymen, and are unjust ones; they rigorously prosecute thieves throughout their country, but those who sit at table with them are robbers, and they not only cherish, but reward them; they give alms plentifully, but in contrast to this is a whole pile of crimes which they have committed; they sit in the seat

of justice, but rarely seek for the rule of right judgment; they despise the innocent and humble, but seize every occasion of exalting to the utmost the bloody-minded, the proud, murderers and adulterers, the combined enemies of God, who ought to be utterly destroyed and their names forgotten.'

"How do you like that?" asked Everitt, with a laugh. "Here is one piece more:

"'Britain hath priests, but they are unwise; very many that minister, but many of them impudent; clerks she hath, but certain of them are deceitful raveners; pastors (as they are called), but rather wolves prepared for the slaughter of souls (for they provide not for the good of the common people, but covet rather the gluttony of their own bellies), possessing the houses of the Church, but obtaining them for filthy lucre's sake; instructing the laity, but showing withal most depraved examples, vices, and evil manners; seldom sacrificing, and seldom with clean hearts standing at the altars; not correcting the commonalty for their offenses, while they commit the same sins themselves; despising the commandments of Christ, and being careful with their whole hearts to fulfill their own lustful desires, some of them usurping with unclean feet the seat of the apostle Peter; but for the demerit of their covetousness, falling down into the pestilent chair of Judas; detracting often, and seldom speaking truly; hating verity as an open enemy, and favoring falsehoods as their most beloved brethren; looking on the just, the poor, and the impotent with stern countenances, as if they were detested serpents, and reverencing sinful rich men without any respect of shame, as if they were heavenly angels; preaching with their outward lips that alms are to be disbursed upon the needy, but of themselves not bestowing one halfpenny.'"*

* The superiority of the Latin of Gildas to the English of Dr. Giles, in respect of energy, may be seen in the following portions:

"Reges habet Britannia, sed tyrannos; judices habet, sed impios;

"But Gildas was born about A.D. 516," observed the thoughtful man, again sarcastically; "and that date is farther back, I am afraid, than Lendleton cares to go."

"It was he who mentioned Gildas, when my mind was directed to times when the Crusades flourished. I was bound to follow his lead."

CHAPTER XVII.

IT CAN NOT BE.

When the visit to Slaughton Park came to a close, Emily Allerton returned with her father and nephew to Regent's Park, her health somewhat recruited, and her heart, upon the whole, lighter, but with a new cause of uneasiness she had never feared would fall to her lot. Partly from some observations made to her by Kate Nugent, and partly from some fresh peculiarities in Mr. Harvey's considerate manner for her, she had discerned the hope which that worthy man entertained with regard to herself—a discovery which was made only a few days before the termination of her sojourn at Slaughton Hill, and which did not tend much to add to her enjoyment of the concluding portion of the visit.

How, immediately she re-entered her home, she began again to work in her customary path of duty, how she rose punctually, and with cheerfulness performed the offices of nurse to her father, and of governess to little Arthur; how she roused herself with cordial self-reproaches when she was sinking back into despondency; how she made joys to be

sæpe prædantes et concutientes, sed innocentes; vindicantes et patrocinantes, sed reos et latrones; quamplurimas conjuges habentes, sed scortantes et adulterantes; crebro jurantes sed perjurantes.

. . . . . .

Sacerdotes habet Britannia, sed insipientes; quamplurimos ministros, sed impudentes; clericos, sed raptores subdolos; pastores, ut dicuntur, sed occisioni animarum lupos paratos—"

grateful for, and strove her best that her heart should not know its own sorrow; and how, in this courageous exertion, she was continually finding new opportunities of time and means to perform acts of charity for the poor who are always with us, it would be tedious here to relate.

The will finds a way, and she had a will. Doubtless, if Master Arthur had been permitted to steal upon her before she was awake in the morning, he would have detected those evidences of grief he once mentioned to his uncle Hugh, but by day her face was alive with smiles, and more animated even than it used to be when she had more of external encouragement.

Hugh was very watchful over her, and never let escape him an occasion for adding to her amusement and comfort. Like a good brother, he brought the journals and magazines for her to read as soon as they were out, dropped in upon her at all odd times to gossip and laugh with her, and in a thousand delicate ways showed her the sympathy he might not express in words. Now and then, but not often, he spoke to her of Isabel, and admitted that he paid occasional visits to his cousin. But he was not by any means candid with Emily on this subject; he told her very little of the much he did, and still less of the much more he felt. That she suspected something of the sad truth, and read so much of the secret of his heart that she feared to learn more, there can be no doubt, for she was a woman with a woman's sagacity; but she forbore from speaking to him, boldly and unflinchingly. Once, indeed, she took his hand, when Isabel's name chanced to be mentioned, and with great earnestness said, "Dear Hugh, be firm; don't let old—" and then she checked herself, the color mounting to her gentle face, and with rising tears she added, "indeed I trust you, indeed I do."

Of the breach between Hugh and Everitt she knew nothing. Of course Hugh never mentioned Everitt's name to

her; and Everitt, immediately on standing aloof from his old friend, discontinued his frequent calls in Regent's Park. Apart from the full occupation which his designs on Miss Leatheby afforded him, and the many society engagements that took up his time and attention, his difference with Emily's brother-in-law was, under the circumstances, an ample reason for his ceasing to present himself continually before her. Certainly he had no suspicion of the affection she had conceived for him; nor was it any change of feeling on his part toward her that induced him to withdraw from her.

Every week saw Mr. Allerton make some decided advance to the termination of the sufferings he endured himself and inflicted on others. For days together the master-passion of his nature would remain dormant; and instead of making a lengthened and laborious toilet, he would not permit his servant to shave him. At other times the old man would persist in passing the entire morning in polishing his boots with his own hands, or in refreshing, with the aid of brushes and bottles of hair-dye, a collection of old wigs on which he put great value. But as he sank deeper and deeper into that pitiable condition which, of all the forms of human decay, is the most distressing to witness, his temper became neither less irritable nor less violent. Occasionally, when the sense of his abject position broke upon him, he would be furious, and even dangerous to those who approached him, till, his rage subsiding, he dropped back on his couch, weeping and subdued. The servant who had tended him for several years declared he could no longer retain the post, and, disregarding the offers by which George Hassell tried to induce him to stay, took his departure almost before a successor was found.

Shortly before this last-mentioned event, which occurred toward the close of the month of July, an incident broke the monotony of Emily's life which must be here faithfully recorded.

One morning she gave orders to her maid that no callers were to be admitted during the day with the exception of Mr. Harvey.

"If any one else should call, say that Mr. Allerton is as well as he has been for some time, but that Mr. Hassell does not wish him to be disturbed, and that I am so engaged that I can see no one."

This direction was a very proper one, if Emily was especially anxious to be free from disturbance; for, though she led a very unvaried, and, as far as external circumstances were concerned, cheerless life, every now and then she was favored with an irruption of callers of quite a different style from George Hassell, Hugh, and Mr. Harvey.

Certain good old ladies were these visitors, friends of Emily's *poor dear mamma* before she made such an unfortunate match, or old flames of *poor dear* Mr. Allerton (in a solemn, sentimental voice) before Providence had seen fit to afflict him! Some of them were kindly old souls, who would gladly have sat up any number of nights with the chastened one; but the greater part were not pleasing specimens of the softer sex, being genteel old maids, with much fear of *the world*, and very little love for man. Living, with at least a due regard to their position as gentlewomen, on limited incomes, without much means or inclination to be charitable, and with no friends to care for them, these rather bitter ladies derived pleasure from pitying poor Emily Allerton, and feeling that it was a Christian duty to support her with morning calls.

So, once a month or more, they dropped in upon Emily, edified her for long half hours with wailings over earthly vanities, and the benighted condition of the lower classes and Roman Catholics, and then, having earnestly exhorted her not to give way to fretfulness or murmuring, and, above all things, to reject the doctrine of transubstantiation, they took their departure, and went to their homes with the comfort-

ing conviction that they had spent their time charitably and piously in bringing poor Emily Allerton's mind to a proper sense of the mercy of chastisement and the wisdom of the Creator.

How Emily sometimes writhed under the preachings of these virtuous old dears! She did not like to occupy herself with the absurdity of their conduct; for so earnest in her devotion was she, that she could not bear, when others spoke of sacred things, to feel ridicule for their narrowness of understanding. And then, they meant it kindly, she said; and perhaps the belief that they were instructing her might give them the happiness of thinking they had done, and might yet do, good. So she checked her rebellious impulses, and listened patiently till the sermons came to an end.

It was with especial reference to these tormentors that Emily gave her "not-at-home" order.

As noon approached, she dismissed Arthur for a ride on his pony in the park, under the care of the servant of the livery-stables in which his steed was kept, and, seating herself in her room, resolved to await patiently the arrival of the visitor she expected, the one caller she had directed was not to be excluded—Mr. Harvey.

As the minutes of her solitude increased in number, she became restless, starting at every sound on the stairs, and at every rap at the doors of neighbors' houses, and as often making an effort to compose herself. Continually she referred to a letter she had that morning received by the post, and as often as she looked at it, her hand trembled, and her complexion passed to and fro, from red to pale, and pale to red.

At last came the ring and thunder at the door, then the well-known, the welcome, but the dreaded step; and, in another second, the merchant—so powerful in the city, so envied in the Exchange—was ushered into the room, to sue for that which all his wealth, and all his goodness, and all his past kindnesses should be unable to purchase.

Emily started to her feet at his presence, and, advancing to meet him, held out her hand. No wonder that her knees trembled beneath her, and that all the objects in the room whirled round rapidly.

"It can not be," she said, in a low voice, as she took Mr. Harvey's hand and pressed it to her lips, as a daughter might bestow such a mark of affection on her father.

A cloud of sadness fell on the merchant's brow, and he did not reply one word as he led, or, rather, carried her in his arms back to her seat.

"You do not think me wrong in allowing you to be admitted? You told me in your letter that if I should not be at home, you would know how to interpret such an answer. But I could not bear that you should turn away from the door to which you have so often brought happiness, the house you have so long blessed with your protection and care—I could not bear, I say, that you should turn away with so cold, so ungracious a response to your letter. Dear Mr. Harvey, I am very sorry for you; I have such affection for you that I would refuse you no other thing; and to refuse you this rends my heart, and makes me feel cruel, heartless, undutiful, ungrateful."

At length he spoke. His first thought was for her; his first words were to calm and reassure her.

"God bless you! God bless you, my dear Miss Allerton; and I thank you for your delicate consideration for me. You act generously and nobly, and sacrifice yourself to spare me the pain of a mortification that in some respects I deserve. Do not speak just now; to do so disturbs you; and I have already caused you uneasiness enough. Let me sit by you a few minutes, with your hand in mine; it will comfort me to remember you had at this moment such confidence in me, and regard for me."

His voice was like his countenance, rough, honest, and manly; and just then so gentle, it could not have more mu-

sically expressed tenderness, and contrition for the agony he had caused his companion, had it been soft as a summer breeze.

For some minutes they were silent, and remained without moving; and when they first stirred, it was Mr. Harvey who broke the stillness by rising to pay Emily the attention of making one or two arrangements in the room for her comfort. One of the blinds he let down, so as to exclude the sun, which was sending a troublesome ray on Emily's face; one of the windows he noiselessly opened, so as to let in the air, which, though warm, was fresh and inspiriting for July; and he poured out a glass of water, and placed it near her, so that she could take it if she wished for it. When he had done all this, he once more seated himself, not, however, on the same chair he occupied a minute or two before, but on one more removed from Emily. Had he been born a noble, bred a courtier, and endowed with all imaginable personal graces, he could not have made these trifling acts more expressive of his admiration for Emily, his love and reverence for her.

"May I still call you 'Emily?' For many years you have permitted me to do so."

"Do not be so kind to me," answered Emily, the tears rising in her eyes and her heart throbbing; "be stern to me; I deserve harshness of you; you assure me you wish to put me at my ease, and yet you pour coals of fire on my head."

"Hush, hush, Emily; let me have my own way."

After a pause, he continued, "If I considered you only, I should leave you now, without saying more; but I must indulge myself. To you it can do no good to hear the story of my unreasonable hopes; but it will relieve me to explain them to you, and find excuses for them. Let me talk of myself, for it will make me remember that I am fast becoming an old man, and I shall, in the course of speaking, find occasion to ask you for one assurance, which I shall not be *happy* before I have obtained."

Emily's nod gave force to the consent of her silence.

"I have never personally imparted to you the particulars of my history; it is not my custom to gratify my egotism by alluding to them, neither does any sensitiveness with regard to the lowliness of my origin and early life make me keep them sacred from discussion. That our Father in Heaven made me, and placed me where he did, is reason enough why I should be grateful for my lot. But I was once in a trying and a hard position. The lowest of the low, I found contempt from those whose humble place in life, you would suppose, would have rendered it impossible for them to despise others. But I was the child of nobody, the nursling of a work-house, and, as such, was despised by the servants of the London markets, even when I was an honest servant too. I only mention this to account, in some measure, for my affections not having, in early life, fixed on some girl in my own obscure rank.

"The hardships of my lot made me contract into myself. For years and years I toiled to get on; but I thank God that, in my ambition for worldly success, the master-longing of my heart was for an opportunity to cultivate those nobler qualities of mind and heart which I was confident I possessed.

"Slowly—at times very slowly, and only after long, patient waiting, success came. I grew rich and powerful. But with my increase of prosperity came also a source of discomfort that perhaps I shall not be able fully to show you, and which most people would ridicule me for mentioning. As I obtained more leisure from business avocations, I educated myself carefully and laboriously, not only by acquiring sound information from books, but by the study of painting and music.

"How I occupied my spare time was kept a profound secret, my most intimate friends wondering what were my amusements after business hours.

"To you—even to you—it must appear almost laughable

to hear a plain, ungraced, awkward man, with a gray head, a weather-beaten face, and hands hardened by labor, say that the master-passion of his existence has been a love of the beautiful. But such is the simple fact. Morally and intellectually, my nature is most sensitive; coarse things repelled me and filled me with pain, even when my companions were all necessarily unpolished and mean; unworthy deeds made me faint with anger and disgust.

"Under such circumstances, it was not wonderful that I withdrew myself from the rude associates of my city life to the elegant pursuits I delighted in, and that I formed no connection of marriage with the families I was by my commercial position thrown in contact with.

"When I was young, the rich citizens' daughters were very different—in education, and consequently very much in tastes and aspirations—from what they are now. Their speech, in accent and idiom, was full of the most painful vulgarisms; their manners were rudely boisterous or distressingly constrained; their views of life were never above the standard of their fathers' shops, and of mental accomplishments they possessed not one. Very different is the state of society now. And doubtless there were many exceptions then to the general description I have been giving; Nature has her own aristocracy in every rank, and under every combination of external circumstances.

"But it was my fate never to find a woman whom I could both love and hope to win. The middle class was opulent and unrefined; and in the aristocratic ranks, an entry to which I might have made had that been my ambition, I could never have won any being who approached my ideal. I might have bought by my wealth an alliance with a proud, ordinary woman of rank; I might have selected a girl from many pretty ones, called her my wife, made her the toy of my idle moments, and advanced her to no little pleasure with the gifts and gauds money would buy.

"But who was I, that I should dare to sue for such a one as I could passionately love? I, the merchant, the child of a work-house, the child of shame, and a man neither young, nor gifted with those brilliant qualities that fascinate in society."

He paused for a few seconds, and with his glance inquired of Emily if she apprehended the object of his words. She made answer by rising from her seat and advancing to him with an entreaty to continue no longer a conversation that was evidently so painful to him.

"Yes, dear child, a few words more. I must say them for my own peace. Let me be selfish," he replied, in the deep, loud, earnest tone in which he habitually spoke, the words coming vast and sonorous from his strong chest, like a giant's words that could not be whispered, and yet they were gentle. "It was reserved for my mature age to cherish a passion for one of another generation than my own, reared under the social influences that have arisen in these later years. I know you will understand me; I know that you need not to be assured that I made my unreasonable request to you, not from any mean desire to have one so lovely and good for the wife of my old age, nor with any insolent hope that any consideration apart from your best affections could move you to marry any man, *but because I loved you better than my life.* Do say you need not be assured of this."

"Indeed I need not. I am sensible how pure, how noble your regard for me is. It seems wickedness in me that I can not return it."

"Don't reproach me with mentioning the agony I have caused you. Let me try to console you by an assurance I can honestly make. Even now, at this moment, when I am deeply troubled, I can see that I shall be happier even through this event. *To have loved you has ennobled me,** and

* The reader will remember Steele's "To have loved that woman was a liberal education."

I cherish the hope that you will not think the less kindly of me for knowing that I have been so dignified."

He said this standing by Emily's side, and as he concluded he bent slightly toward her, and, taking her hand again in his, pressed it to his lips.

"Dear sir," Emily faltered out, scarce conscious of what she said, "do leave me now, but come again soon, and let me know that I have not quite broken your peace and happiness. And go to Kate Nugent, and tell her to have no secrets from you, but to communicate to you every thing she can tell of me. Do this. Tell her I sent you. You will not then, at any future time, be tempted to accuse me of coldness or cruelty for what I have done."

Again he kissed her hand fervently, and then, without another word, left the room.

Emily listened to his steps as he retreated, and heard them proceed to her father's room. Even then, at that moment, when he was deeply troubled, he thought not of himself, and how he should lighten his own sorrow, but of her, and how he could relieve her of an irksome and distressing portion of her daily duties.

CHAPTER XVIII.

RESEMBLES THE LAST.

It will be deemed worthy of commemoration by all who have a taste for "extraordinary coincidences" that George Hassell made a matrimonial proposal in clear, definite, and forcible terms to Kate Nugent at the very same time in which Mr. Harvey and Emily Allerton were having the interesting interview recorded in the last chapter. The reader, perhaps, may suspect that this circumstance was in some degree the fruit of mutual understanding and agreement on the part of the gentlemen in question; that they said to each

other in friendly conference, "Do you go in, my dear fellow, at the same time that I go in, and then, when we come out, let us meet together, and freely communicate how we have fared;" and that, acting in accordance with the terms of such a compact, the one hastened to the Regent's Park, and the other hurried down from Quolibet Street to Elm Cottage, Slaughton. But such a suspicion would be unjust; for, though Mr. Harvey and George Hassell were very constant companions, and had very few secrets (of course, with the exception of professional ones) from each other, they, strange to say, never at any time alluded to the tender hopes they cherished. Whether each thought the other ignorant of the delicate truth; and whether, in that case, each was silent from the prudential consideration that, if his suit should not prosper, it would not be agreeable to have his failure known, even to a peculiar friend; or whether a sensitive repugnance to putting their feelings in words of itself restrained them from mutual confidence, it is impossible to say.

As George drove from town to Slaughton to seek the presence of Miss Nugent, he was as despondent as men usually are on like occasions. Reviewing their friendship from its beginning, and more especially recalling the last few years of it since his wife's death, he strove to extract encouragement from the retrospect, but in vain. Already he was in the shadow of the disappointment prepared for him.

"Ha! Nancy, my child, is it you?" said he, as he stepped out of his carriage, and passed through the garden gate of Elm Cottage.

The greeting was made to a diminutive little girl, who sat alone on a chair in the open air, under the covering of an acacia tree that formed a desirable barrier to the rays of the hot July sun. The child was studying a spelling-book attentively, and was so inwrapt in her occupation that she did not look up till George spoke again, and in a louder voice. On this second salute she started up, and ran to the gate with a cry of delight.

"Oh! it is my doctor," she repeated, as she clung to his knees.

"At your lesson, then, like a good girl?"

"You made me able to see the letters," was the answer.

"This garden is a sweetly pretty spot. Don't you like the flowers?"

"Now I can see them. Once I could only smell them," answered Nancy, with an intelligent voice.

"You like this better than school?"

"Oh yes, sir, much. And I am learning all I can."

But there was a cloud over her brown face and eyes, now full of significance.

"Come, what is it?" the surgeon inquired, softly, taking a seat on her chair, and giving her a kiss as he drew her toward him.

"Mother never comes now."

"She will soon, Nancy. She loves you very dearly, and when she can she'll come back to you."

"I'd rather go to her."

"Would you like to leave your good friend, Miss Nugent? Don't you love her?"

"Not like my mother. And Miss Nugent tells me every night, when I say my prayers to her, that I must never love any one, except God, so well as my mother."

"Well, well, don't be sad. I saw her the other day."

"Did you, sir? indeed? indeed?"

"Yes, indeed, indeed I did," George replied, with a smile. "And I told her all about you—how you were growing quite a clever child, and could read the Bible all by yourself. She asked me if you were happy, and pined for her. I answered that you wished very much to see her, and were always talking about her; but that you knew better than to be fretful because it was necessary for her to keep away from you for a short time. And what think you? She gave me a little book to bring to you. Here it is."

As he spoke, he took from his pocket a small volume.

"The Testament—and all so smart with gold edges!" exclaimed the child, with natural delight; and then, remembering whose gift it was, she pressed it to her heart.

George gave her another kiss as a parting salute, and then taking courage, went on his way, and with a beating heart entered the cottage.

The entreaty was soon preferred, and the answer soon made; and the sentence fell upon George with that effect which misfortunes vaguely dreaded, and for long *hoped against*, are wont to produce.

"You can not love me?" he asked, twice or thrice, as if repeating Miss Nugent's words unconsciously.

She was silent, and averted her face.

"You can not?" he repeated, once more.

"No, George, I did not say that. Do not make me say what I have not spoken. Let me deal with you with such perfect candor as shall convince you of the affection I bear you, and also of the unalterable character of my determination. George Hassell, look at me, look into me, watch me as I speak, and read me more clearly than you have ever done before—behold all I display to you; but in generosity, by your own generosity, forbear from lifting any curtain I am compelled to hang before myself."

Usually her whole bearing was that of an invalid, her voice being weak, and her appearance that of one who would be overpowered by a violent emotion, the firm lips and decided brow alone declaring the strong purpose and life that were within her; but now every feature of her face was alive with energy, all signs of bodily languor and debility had vanished, and George was astonished at finding her eyes glowing brightly, and terrible to be gazed upon.

"Your petition was that I would be your wife. My reply was 'Never.' You reminded me (a trouble you need not have taken) how long we have known each other, how we

have labored together, how intimately we are acquainted with each other's labors, how our pursuits and aspirations are in unity. All this I am proud to acknowledge. We have been fellow-laborers; may we continue to be so; but more to each other we can not be. Answer me, have you ever discerned any waverings in my character? Have you not ever felt that I am one whose resolves are not made without deliberation and anxious prayer, and that when made, my determinations are unalterable? Don't ask 'why?' You wrong me and yourself by hinting a doubt that I could speak on this important subject without consideration. Can you still *hope?*"

"No, Kate, no," George said, softly.

"Would you wish to conquer me—to crush me into a recantation? You see the agony I endure; you see how scarcely I can perform my hard duty—my cruel, bitter duty; would you make the struggle more painful? Oh! do not contend with me."

"Trust me—you know you may trust me. Speak no more; you have said enough."

"Leave me, George, now. I do not ask you to remain away from me; though, if I thought it would tend to your happiness, I would forget myself—care not for the cheerless prospect of life without your friendship, and beg you now to say good-by to me forever. But your heart would not be lighter if you were separated from me. Our minds are made alike—they receive no impressions but deep ones; in some respects, such a nature may be a misfortune; those whose joy is superficial and transitory do not grieve deeply; the summer flower, that dies and disappears at the approach of the cold winds, does not shiver through the cold and miserable months of winter."

"Help me to control myself. I am the weakling, you are the strong one."

"We must help each other. God will help us," answered Kate, sinking back into her chair.

George departed.

Slowly and sadly he walked home. The calm, blue sky, the twittering of the birds in the hedge-rows, the lights and shadows, never resting, of the leafy trees, the bright beds and sunny lawn of his own garden, he heeded not.

Sister Polly saw him as he passed through the gate, and she discovered the disaster of the morning in the dejection of his countenance. She withdrew from his observation, and did not stop him on his way to his private room, in which, when two hours or more had passed, his children—his babes, his golden-haired fairies—found him. He took them in his arms, gazed upon them through tearful eyes, smoothed their bright locks, and conferred on them many endearments. But how small a space can love for children—even one's own children—occupy of a great heart!

The remainder of that day Kate Nugent spent with Nancy, her adopted child, and a winning, gracious little being the child was. In the evening she went to St. Stephen's, and joined in the service, as she did that first night we saw her. Neither Nancy nor any of the household saw any thing unusual in her demeanor, gentle and conciliating as it ever was. But when night came, and all was at rest in the calm cottage with the exception of its mistress, she gave way to her pent-up feelings, and with much weeping and entreaty, and confession to the Divine Master she served, she sought the consolation and encouragement she so much needed.

"O Lord, thou hast chastened me and I am chastened. I do not rebel, I do not murmur. The sin of my youth is ever before me. I do not ask for a less severe punishment. Only give me strength to persevere, and do not let me sin against Thee, and deceive so good a man."

CHAPTER XIX.

COPLEY RECTORY.

As the season progressed, there were persons in London who, week by week, looked more and more jaded, till, just when Parliament was prorogued, in the heat and glare of July, they had the appearance of being ripe for the grave. Of these jaded ones some were young girls, whose sickly faces were carried about London in the afternoon, as they took their *airings* in noisy thoroughfares, and who were never seen to smile until the factitious gayety of a succession of nocturnal assemblies had relieved them for a few short hours of headache and languor; some were politicians, pale and leaden-eyed with assiduous attendance at committees and tedious debates, and with vexatious strife; some were lawyers, who for months had fagged all night at their causes, getting them up, and had wrangled all day over them, arguing them before judges of all degrees of honor, and gentlemen of the jury of all grades of stupidity; some were physicians, faint and exhausted with innumerable visits to ladies dying of *ennui*, and boredom, and society, who moaned and vapored out their complaints in a fashion that would have roused the ire of Abernethy. All these, together with all workers who had either achieved distinction, or were destined to do so, were getting very sick of London heat and London racket, and were pining for gusts of fresh sea-breeze, or cool evenings in the country. But of them all, done-up men and drooping maidens, there was not one for whom rest and recreation were more necessary than Hugh Falcon.

It has already been hinted that Hugh was far from being a strong man. More than once he had been brought down

to death's door by no other disease than bodily prostration, consequent on long-continued mental exertion and excitement. But if his physical powers were slight, he failed to pay them the ill compliment of twitting them for their weakness by protecting them, for he always demanded as much from them as he would have done had they been greater than ordinary. His life was not a vicious one, yet it was emphatically fast, and calculated to drain him of his vigor and energy in a very short space of time. No man, however talented he may be, and however good a connection with publishers and newspaper proprietors he may have, can earn from eight hundred to a thousand pounds per annum as a journalist without much exercise of brain and much steady exertion. Hugh was a successful writer, and that is the same as saying that he went yearly through an amount of toil that few constitutions are able to bear. But, besides the burden of his literary avocations, he had to repay society in mirth and jokes that attention which society paid him in flattery, and laughter, and petting; the consequence of which was, that much of his leisure and very much of his comfort were given up to morning calls, breakfast engagements, lunches, dinners, balls, and other less refined but not less enjoyable entertainments, of which the Punch Bowl may be referred to as an example.

Those who have led such a life as this, and have tried to go through the toil of work and the toil of pleasure combined, can alone form a fair estimate of Hugh's condition at the approach of the long vacation. At the commencement of the day, scarce able to put one foot before the other; at noon, pushing aside his paper, irritable at not being able to write in a manner creditable to himself; in the afternoon, walking and riding rapidly from one part of London to another; after dinner, pushing into hot theatres, crowded drawing-rooms, and noisy clubs till long past midnight; then returning home to dash off the articles that *must be done;* and finally, after daybreak, putting a nervous, excited, perplexed

head down on a restless pillow — so Hugh lived! What slave's existence is not preferable?

At last his release came; and, with the prospect of three or four months' complete change, Hugh was whirled down by a rapid train into the green fields, and over the wide, wide plains of the country.

Where was his destination? Copley Rectory.

Acting in accordance with his son's suggestion, the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough, on leaving London, made only a brief visit at Brandon, and then went to Copley, there to prepare for visitors, and to remain till the end of the autumn, when it was his intention to return to Brandon, to adorn the cathedral of that picturesque city with his presence for several weeks—indeed, till London was once more full enough, and brilliant enough, and in every way fit to receive him for another season.

As a pluralist, the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough was an interesting study. That there was any thing wrong in one man taking the pay of four, and not doing the work of even one, he was ready at any moment to deny vehemently; still he was a conscientious divine, and made great matter of making frequent visits to his various preferments, and really in his inmost heart believed that the vital interests of the Established Church and of Christianity were concerned in his annual journeyings from town to Copley, and Brandon, and to and fro between those provincial seats of ecclesiastical fruitfulness.

The day following Hugh's arrival at Copley, where he met with an enthusiastically cordial welcome from the rector and Isabel, Captain Dillingborough came over from the adjoining county, and staid with his family for eight or ten days. Delighted he both seemed and was with having Hugh domesticated with Isabel, and very agreeably were those ten days passed in excursions to old haunts in the neighborhood, for which Mr. Dillingborough in childhood, and Hugh in youth, had conceived an affection.

One day they all four drove over to Farne Abbey, and made a picnic luncheon on the green plot in the centre of the venerable ruins, Hugh knocking the head off the neck of the Champagne bottle (the servants having, of course, forgotten to bring a corkscrew), and the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough proposing a bumper to the memory of the monks of old, in whose honor the jovial old clergyman (in one of his happiest moods) sung a stanza from a well-known song.

It was, however, impossible for Frederick Dillingborough to remain long at Copley; an engagement at Bath, and an invitation to Lincolnshire that could not be declined, calling him away. As soon, therefore, as he had satisfied himself that Hugh would enjoy his visit, and be in no hurry to change quarters, he took his departure, with a promise of returning before the lapse of many days.

"You will wait till I come back?" Captain Dillingborough said to Hugh, in the presence of his father and Isabel.

"Wait?" cried the old man. "Where does he want to be off to? He is to be with us for months, till we've put him to rights and made him a man again. He is a patient, and has no right to freedom of action."

"Oh yes. Hugh has come here not only for enjoyment, but for health and good nursing," observed Isabel, gravely, with a countenance that implied she felt the authority and responsibilities of her office.

"This unfortunate man's state of health will not allow him to be removed for some time," put in Hugh, drolly. "He must be taken great care of, for he is valuable; he must be fed with every delicacy, be supported with rare wines, and have his spirits kept up by cheerful conversation."

"If you become wild and frantic, I shall put you in a strait waistcoat," said Isabel. "I am of opinion that all that invalids require is firm treatment."

"All they need is to be nursed by you—or such as you," said the rector, with equal courtesy and earnestness, taking her right hand in his as he spoke.

"When our lords wish to be complimentary, they usually make some such speech," Isabel answered, with a merry laugh; and, turning to Captain Dillingborough, she added, "I dare say, Frederick, you think that women are just capable of tending sick men."

"When they love them," rejoined the captain, dryly.

"I question whether, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, a sick man's sweetheart would make him the best possible nurse. I am inclined to think that usually the poor fellow would fare badly with such an attendant," observed Hugh.

"Hear him! hear him!" cried the rector, bursting into loud laughter. "And he is a poet!"

"What woman would not give up her life for the man she loved?" asked Isabel, indignantly.

"A sick man does not want his nurse to destroy *her* life; his object is to save his own," observed Frederick, with the ice of his peculiar coldness.

"I do not doubt," said Hugh, replying to Isabel, "any true woman would suck the poisoned wound to save her hero's life, and gladly bear in her own person the tortures even of death, to remove them from him. But how would she bear herself through weeks and months of tedious waiting on the caprices of her invalid lover? How would she put up with the apathy of sickness, the restlessness and discontent with every thing, which his disease might compel him to evince? If, reduced with pain and stupefied with weakness, he should not speak for days together, should find pleasure in none of her services, should scarcely seem aware of her presence, would she not, most probably, accuse him of being silent because he did not desire to speak with *her*—of being discontented with every thing because he was displeased with

her—of being drowsy, and seemingly unconscious, because he was not in the humor to sport with *her*?

"Who has put these disagreeable, contemptible notions into your head?"

"They are a portion of the results of confessions made me by a friend, who lost the affections of the woman he loved by imprudently allowing her to visit him frequently during a severe and protracted illness. 'At first she was a sister of charity, compassionate and self-sacrificing; but soon—how she altered! She wanted me to be repaying her goodness with glances of affection, when my eyes were so hot and heavy I could scarce endure them in my head. And when I could scarcely speak distinctly enough to make known my humblest wants, she was crying because I did not woo her with soft sentences of gratitude.' I am quoting my friend's words."

"The friend you love best, I doubt not—yourself," retorted Isabel, to whom Hugh's mischievous eye made it clear that he was using the historic form only that he might tease her with a better grace.

The next day Captain Dillingborough departed.

After this secession from the party, the life in Copley Rectory underwent a certain indescribable change, as far as Hugh and Isabel were concerned, for the better. While Frederick Dillingborough was present, Hugh felt himself rather in society where he was bound to be sparkling and entertaining, than in the home of his relations, where he was entitled to the refreshment of inaction. Isabel, also, never came to be perfectly at her ease with her step-son; though she treated him with uniform confidence, and had much affection for him (for whom had she not? bless her!), she retained a little of her old fear of him, and hardly ever addressed him without considering, before she spoke, whether it would be prudent for her to say, and agreeable to him to hear, what she was about to communicate to him. Consequently, the removal

of Captain Dillingborough from the scene had a grateful effect on the two cousins.

Hugh soon settled down in the quiet home-life of the Rectory, just as if he had been born in it. A sitting-room, well furnished with books of reference, adjoining his bed-room, was given up to him for a study, so that he might withdraw into solitude and work whenever he wished to do so. At an early hour he rose, and always before midnight he retired to rest. Much of every day he and Isabel spent together; their breakfast they usually took in company, undisturbed by a third presence, for the rector liked his bed even till midday, and was in the habit of taking the first repast of every four-and-twenty hours before he rose from his couch. Hugh did not object to this arrangement, and perhaps Isabel did not dislike it. Certainly she every morning seemed to have great pleasure in greeting her cousin, praising him if he had more color than usual in his pale face, scolding him most cruelly and bountifully if he pleaded guilty to the charge of reading late in his own room, and having much to prattle about as they sat over their tea and coffee, the soft air coming in to them from the garden full of sweet-scented flowers, and the lovely prospect of the Witherstone and Kilverton hills lying before them.

After breakfast they idled away an hour in the shady corners of the garden, discussing many a knotty point, sometimes of floriculture, sometimes of art, sometimes of *sentiment*—why not? Before they re-entered the house, little Harrie, followed by his nurse, would find them, and hold up his beautiful face to be kissed.

"My charming Harrie! mamma does not deserve to have you! Why don't you go to some one who loves you better?" Isabel would say to the young gentleman, who would show his precocious discernment of humor by roaring with laughter as often as this form of address was used.

"A charming boy, though more like his father than you," *Hugh* would observe.

"Do you recollect saying you would not love him because he was not yours?"

"Nay—did I? Well, since he *isn't mine*, it is something that he *is yours*."

Under ordinary circumstances, the next event of the day was the appearance of the old rector, sleek, and shining, and fresh from the hands of his valet. Then came lunch. After that agreeable repast, the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough would retire to his library to write his letters and sleep till dinner-time. Hugh and Isabel would take their books, and sit with them, making pretense to read, under the magnificent trees on the lawn; or, if they thought the day cool enough, and they had an object in view, they took drives in the pony phaeton, Isabel acting as whip, and Hugh lying back at his ease, instructing her how to hold her reins and adroitly manage her steed. Home to dinner, when the fruit and cool wine at dessert would cause the rector to brighten up and set loose his tongue, and enable him for a few hours to enjoy life.

Then the long summer evening, passed in the garden, watching the sun falling down into the far west. How unconsciously Hugh and Isabel grew together, as they led this calm and delicious life! They compared their lives and experiences, and without ever thinking that they were making confidences, they spoke frankly and with simplicity as their thoughts came now on things gay, and now on things serious. Perhaps Isabel was the more communicative, and Hugh occasionally had to check himself, as he was about to utter that which he would bitterly have repented having said; but if this were the case, she did not perceive his constraint, and in the truthfulness of her nature continued to pour forth the treasure of her mind. "Oh God!" thought Hugh, more than once, "she thinks as I thought when I was fresh with hope and unstained by the world."

Once in every few days some member of the Kilverton

family would pay a visit to Isabel, and rather oftener she would make an excursion to her father's house, usually alone, but sometimes attended by Hugh. If Isabel had been allowed her own way, she would have maintained very intimate relations with her father's children, and would have always had one or more of them staying with her. But this the gallant Captain Potter would not listen to for an instant. No, Isabel had a position to maintain in life, and she must maintain it; the children of a poor half-pay officer, though he had the good fortune to possess a small landed estate, and to be in the commission, could not presume to be of the same rank with the Honorable Mrs. Harrie Dillingborough—possibly the mother of a future Lord Dillingborough. The children might occasionally call at Copley Rectory, and in case Mrs. Dillingborough should be at liberty and wish to see them, they might remain for a short time. He even insisted on being himself patronized by Isabel, always approaching her with expressions of deference, assuring her that, although he was her father, he felt himself honored by her attentions, and persisting in never making his appearance at her house when she had visitors, unless he received an express invitation, which summons of course *he obeyed.*

When Hugh, accompanying Isabel, paid his visit to Kilverton, and for the first time for more than seven years took his uncle by the hand, the captain was evidently astonished and chagrined. The greeting was not a cordial one; and beyond mutual assurances that they could not remember how long it was since they last met, they could find little else to say except that they found each other very altered. Certainly the change in the captain was great. In his face the lines of age were deeper, and the expression was meaner. Shrunken and thinner, too, he had become; his step was less vigorous, and a touch of palsy made the once firm hand shake.

The day following his unexpected reintroduction to Hugh,

the captain called at Copley, and found an opportunity to lead Isabel aside for a few private words.

"I was surprised, my dear, at finding your cousin with you. I imagined you did not see much of him," observed the father, fidgeting.

"We have seen a great deal of him lately. My husband and Captain Dillingborough are charmed with him."

"I am sure I am glad to hear it, my dear. For my part, I bear the young man no ill-will, and am quite ready to say let by-gones be by-gones."

"What do you mean by that, father?" Isabel asked, with unusual asperity of tone and manner.

"I mean, dear, that years have passed now since his early follies, and so I would not judge him severely for them. But you know he was very dissipated—a very dissolute, bad young man indeed. But he is, I hope, reformed; and, now that you have taken him by the hand, he may once more get into respectable society."

Isabel turned away, not caring to hear more, and not pleased with having heard so much; and soon afterward Captain Potter said farewell, and went on his homeward way. A visit to Copley always had a grateful effect on the spirits of Godfrey Potter. He never cared to stop long, but to drop in upon his distinguished relatives invariably did him good, and sent him off rejoicing. If he was bound for any of the county houses which he visited in his character of news promulgator, a recent interview with his daughter's connections enabled him to enter those palatial residences with a pleasing consciousness that he was not unfit for the high position he was called upon to occupy in society; and when the day closed and candles came, and he opened his favorite book, to be able to reflect that that very morning he had kissed the cheek of the Honorable Mrs. Harrie Dillingborough gave a peculiar beauty to that favorite book, and especially to the favorite page whereon was seen, in fair type,

the name of "Isabel, dau. of Godfrey Potter, Esq., of Kilverton, co. ———, J.P. for the co., formerly Captain in the 16th Foot."

"Ah! at one time," the captain used to say, on closing that favorite book, "I little expected to see my name mentioned in the peerage. If the Honorable Marmaduke would die, and Captain Frederick would die, why, I might perhaps myself die—*the grandfather of a British baron!*"

CHAPTER XX.

FULL OF DANGERS.

"BEFORE you came to us, Hugh, I had my doubts if the visit would be a success. I feared you would not find rest in our perfect seclusion, and that the quiet of my home would make you fretful, and be not less hurtful to you than the dissipation of London, which wears you to a shadow."

"You think of me as a vexed and perturbed spirit," replied Hugh, with a smile.

"I had not given your character credit for so much composure," responded Isabel.

"You saw me in tossing and troubled waters. We are all more or less the sport of circumstances."

"But all the vessels in the same agitated sea were not so driven to and fro as you."

"I can not bear a storm unmoved; but is that a reason why I should not like the calm? May not the man who in the world is led by worldly things, rejoice in the simple pleasures of a home when he has one?"

It was evening; and Hugh and Isabel were sitting under the elms on the lawn as they interchanged their words. As yet, twilight was an hour distant, and the blue heavens were not darkened, but only dimmed by a delicate veil of misty gold. Before them was the rich landscape; behind them

was the Rectory, with its master reading the newspaper, just arrived from London, at the open window of the library.

"You speak of yourself as an inexperienced stripling, and not as a developed and powerful man."

"Nor am I developed."

"It is time you arrived at maturity."

"True. I pulled as many as twenty gray hairs from my head this morning. But it is not time alone that brings to perfection. Those apricots we looked at this morning on the north wall may hang till Christmas, and yet they will not be ripe."

"But man has his own sun within him; he has only to exercise his will, and in answer to his 'let there be,' light and heat pour down on all quarters equally."

"Are you too—an egotist?"

"Don't call names. An unripe man, at least, ought to be able to bridle his tongue."

"If man has no need of external influences, why are you enthusiastic in gospel missions to the heathen tribes?"

"But you are not a painted savage."

She laughed so lightly and merrily as she said this, and there mingled in her mirth such an affectionate admiration of Hugh, he was compelled to be grateful and join the laugh.

"If I were one, you would redeem me from wildness," Hugh responded.

"You would blush to be found paying empty compliments. So now, to prove the sincerity of the respect you profess for me, be guided by my advice."

"I promise to obey you."

"Make up your mind to remain here for many weeks, and occupy a portion of each day in writing something that shall be your best work."

"I shall never now write any thing *great*. All there is to admire in me is 'what I might have been.' I might have been a poet, but now I shall never be any thing nobler than a jester."

"*You shall*," said Isabel, warmly, her glowing eyes looking into his. "Hugh, you wrong yourself, and in doing so, are not loyal to those who care for you. The freshness is fast returning to your complexion; is it not also coming back to your mind?"

Hugh paused; and when he answered, it was with a soft and solemn voice. "Last night, when, in obedience to your orders, I ought to have been asleep, I stood at my open window, and watched the silent country and the gleaming river, peaceful in the soft moonlight; it was no strange thing that I thought of my boyhood and my youth, when a trip down here was an excursion to a land of exquisite delights; but it made me start with surprise to detect myself treating the old hopes, not as dead, decayed sticks, but as living flowers that would bloom forever. It was so unlike any passage of my latter years that I could not keep myself from tears."

"I knew it! I knew it! The darkness is going, and the fresh morning is breaking again. Promise to obey me. You say your life has lacked an influence necessary to its completeness. Can I not be that influence?"

Hugh smiled, and said, not mockingly, but tenderly, even deferentially, "Poor child! you know not what you say."

"You reproach me for my ambition?"

"No, no."

"Let us forget ourselves in that," said Isabel, pointing to the western horizon, along and over which the increasing splendors of the sunset were hanging. "What glories are there in Heaven!"

Not another word was spoken for some minutes, till Hugh, rising from the ground, on which he had been lying at Isabel's feet, said sententiously, but with much feeling, "Nature is preaching your sermon, Isabel, even as her words are always one with those of a pure and noble human creature. The savage of the desert at least is taught *to hope*.

'The distant is beautiful,' says Nature. Man repeats the words, and conceives a longing for the future. But the savage of the city never hopes. All the objects that strike upon his eye are so near him that they oppress him. I verily believe that, uninstructed by Nature, the future can be nothing more to him than the dull, dark streets he wanders up and down."

They said but little more that night. Having quitted their resting-place, they returned to the house, and for an hour or more sat in the library with the old rector, who amused himself with recounting the adventures of his boyhood, the practical jokes he and his comrades half a century before had achieved in the quadrangles of Christ Church, the noisy absurdities of college wine-parties, and the many ways in which he had baffled the acutest of proctors, and humbled the most majestic of tutors.

At every fresh reminiscence the story-teller roared with laughter, throwing himself back in his chair, and positively struggling with the force of his mirth. It was fast becoming darker, and there were no candles in the room; but still, every thing was visible to Hugh in the twilight. He saw Isabel leave her chair, and softly approach her husband; and as the tears of boisterous merriment ran down the old man's cheeks, she smoothed his white locks with her fair right hand, and then twined her arms round his neck. She did her best to laugh, from a sense of duty; and so did Hugh, out of politeness; and thus the rector had an audience to his mind.

The next evening but one after this, Hugh and Isabel were again sitting under their favorite trees, when the latter was surprised, not unpleasantly, by Hugh assuring her she had carried her point, and that he was already at work as she had desired him; and, if she wished to hear them, he would read her, day by day, the pages of his story, as he finished them.

Isabel was delighted, and demanded what the book was to be about.

"What would you prefer?"

"I can not say—I like all kinds of books in their proper times. How I wish I could write!"

"Take courage; trust your powers; select a good subject, and patiently elaborate it; and you would achieve something more than respectable."

"I would be a biographer!" said Isabel, proudly.

"Where is the great man whose life you would depict?"

"Perhaps I would content myself with a little woman."

"And inscribe upon your book, 'A Little Volume for Little Minds!' But, seriously, do you think biographers do good?"

"They make us acquainted with great men."

"Rather, they gossip about their littleness."

"If they are performed by unworthy workmen. The valet-biographer would, of course, in valet fashion, speak only of his hero's paddings and defects; but the hero's friend would do otherwise."

"Suppose we knew nothing of the great ones who are dead except what their works tell us; should we not have in our imaginations Elysian fields peopled with demigods, where now we have only smart shop-gardens full of holiday-makers? Does the little we know of Shakspeare add to the dignity and beauty of the conception we form of him from Hamlet?"

"No; but that is because we know so little."

"Take Milton; we know more of him. Recall your ideal of the author of 'Paradise Lost' when you first read the poem at seventeen years of age, and compare it with the crabbed old man of history, quarreling with his wives, and neglecting the education of his daughters. Are there not two Byrons—the poet, commanding the warmest sympathies of your heart, and the petty fop, whining over his club foot,

and reducing himself to an interesting pallor and tenuity by starvation and calomel? two Coleridges?"

"But a great man's greatness exists in his great deeds, not in his *little* ones."

"Then why can not we be content with his great, if it be his greatness we admire, and not pry into his little acts?"

"We want to find him always great."

"Which he never is. Think, if we had not a line of the tattling books of gossip about illustrious men, the '*Friends I have Met*' of A., and the 'Table-Talk' of B., and we could arrive at no information concerning mighty thinkers and poets except from the study of their works, how much more noble would our race appear! how much nearer should we ourselves seem to the beautiful!"

"Indeed, you are right," observed Isabel, after a pause of consideration. "Where there is silence, we are reverential. In the darkness and in solitude I have felt it."

"You have a sympathy with authors, Isabel."

"If by a wish I could change my lot for good or for ill, for better or for worse, I would be an artist—a thinker and a teacher of the beautiful. Oh! if I could but be a poet. I would not demand the privilege of writing much. One short song would be enough, only let it be one that should strike home to every heart. I would gladly die having accomplished this." Her eyes flashed with intensity of emotion as she said this.

"The world and you differ."

"I can not help it."

"Good society has a sublime pity for scribblers. Tell me where genius is respected before it is successful, or where it is cordially liked after it has forced its way to distinction. Did you ever meet a *poor* student or an *unknown* painter at a May-Fair dinner-party? And don't well-bred people apologize to their friends if they are seen nodding to such creatures in the streets? Ask the stupidest barrister in any

Inn his opinion of Talfourd, and he will reply, 'A meritorious man—unquestionably, a meritorious man; but it is to be lamented that he has turned his attention to literature.'"

"And don't you think it has ever been so, Hugh—that the true worker has been looked on with mistrust? It is my fancy that the first father-knights of feudal chivalry, when they rode in upon their fierce horses, were held by respectable people, and good timid, selfish people, to be very bad fellows. And another fancy of mine is that, centuries hence, men will look back to this age, and venerate its goose-quills as we do the swords that flashed in the Crusades."

Hugh laughed, and said "Ha! ha! I see you will lend a favorable ear to my novel."

"It is a novel, then?"

"What do you understand by the word?"

"A prose poem."

"Then we shall see."

The next evening the readings commenced, Hugh sitting on the grass at Isabel's feet, and ever and again looking up into her face, as he read, for her glances of approval. The story we need not here detail; it is enough to say that it was the cautiously veiled narrative of much of the writer's life, and that the interest of it increased as the particulars of his unfortunate passion were brought to view. The greater portion of the manuscript had been written years back (when the disappointment of Hugh's love was new), and uncompleted, it had been put aside.

What made Hugh bring it to Copley, it would be hard to say. Perhaps he anticipated pleasure in reading it by himself, while he should be surrounded by the self-same fields, and trees, and scenery with which the larger number of the events described were connected. Perhaps, as he put the papers into his trunk, a vague prevision of the use to which they were soon to be put flitted across his mind, and caused him for a few short moments to tremble and hesitate.

Every night, after bidding the rector good-night, which ceremony was always performed before ten o'clock, he applied himself to his work for two hours. Here and there alterations were made so as to prevent Isabel, by any possibility, from detecting the full meaning of passages that would, in their original construction, have enlightened her beyond a doubt on the subject where, to her, ignorance was bliss. Besides these improvements, numerous smaller corrections were made, redundancies of language were removed, rude, extravagant expressions were struck out, and the entire work was revised with judicious care.

The clerical labor, however, was not tedious, and regularly as each evening came, Hugh had a considerable packet ready for Isabel's ear. Indeed, the installments were so liberal, her suspicions were aroused; and she told Hugh, with a laugh, she could not understand how he could write so much in the short time he had to himself out of every four-and-twenty hours; and seeing he was at a loss what answer to make, she boldly accused him of deceiving her with a profession of writing because she commanded it, when he had already composed the entire novel.

It was to no purpose that the culprit attempted to jest away the charge, with assurances that he could manage to work five pens at the same time, and so could get through a great amount of scribbling between the hours of ten and twelve; Isabel saw clearly that her romance writer was not imparting to her a recent production, but one that had been carefully considered, and in all probability commenced long ago.

This discovery, however, did not make the novel less interesting to her, for she soon had good reason for being sure that the man who read it to her was the man who penned it, and that, however many years it had been written, Hugh sincerely felt the truth of all it taught, and had a true artist's delight in the beauties of his conceptions.

"Oh, Hugh," she said, one evening, when the reading had come to an end, "I have never seen any thing of your writing equal to this, which is the full and beautiful fruit of which your first book, published when you were a boy, gave the promise."

"Then it seems you do not hold some of my productions in very high esteem?" Hugh rejoined, with a laugh.

"Many of them I think unworthy of you, though they are smart and witty enough; and I have often lamented that you should expend your time and talents in work for pay, rather than art and honorable fame. You were not meant to be only the sprightly companion, to amuse with jests and to play with words, but to be the thinker, to teach men how to be wise and good. It depresses me to think how little the world knows you, how far too lowly you are rated by almost all your many admirers; yet you deserve your fate, for you have not made yourself known to them."

"It matters not; there is one who believes in me, and more I do not ask for."

Isabel did indeed believe in him, and she had good reason to regard him with admiration and peculiar affection. Deeply read, accomplished, and abounding with information on nearly every subject, Hugh was an intellectual phenomenon worthy the attention—perhaps the commiseration—of the most gifted minds; and yet it was manifest to Isabel that, instead of feeling he descended from a height when he spoke with her, he derived not more pleasure than he imagined he derived of instruction from her conversation.

Every day they spent together in seclusion she became more impressed with the greatness of his powers of mind and heart, and as often was she presented with fresh evidence of the respect he cherished for her judgment and goodness.

As they sat in-doors over their books and drawings, and letters, or as they sauntered through the gardens, or drove through the picturesque scenery of the surrounding district,

without any effort at display, and speaking with a calm composure that invested every musical sentence that came from his lips with that same gentle soothing influence the balmy atmosphere and the serene heavens possessed, Hugh converted every trifling incident and object into a means of giving pleasure to his companion: starting from a painting of mediæval life or Eastern manners, he would draw word-pictures of the social condition of the period or country, embellishing his sketches with anecdotes and biographic narrative, imparted in the happiest language; the structure of a flower would carry him to the luxuriant vegetation of the American forests, and he would enumerate their many beauties with the exactness of science and the imagery of poetry; and ever to the varied and varying features of the scenery they gazed upon—the sun blazing upon the distant hill-top, the line of dark shade thrown across a valley, or the river flashing brightly into the sombre forest—he linked moral truths. Such a deep and earnest religious sentiment was there in his nature.

So accustomed had Isabel been to associate him in her mind with levity and mirth (although she had always given him credit for more solemn feelings than he could display in general society), she was startled when she first heard him speak of the Creator of that which is; but soon her surprise ceased as she discovered that he habitually pondered on the deep and hidden things of the universe, and ever sought for guidance from Him who fashioned them. To her true womanly heart, the simplicity and easy frankness with which Hugh spoke on matters appertaining to religion were very fascinating. She had, at different times, been chilled by the cold gloom of fanaticism, and shocked by the apathy of worldliness, but never had she met a man who seemed to have so cheering, constant, unfluctuating and devout a sense of the divine benevolence as her idle cousin Hugh.

"You have more than once told me your surprise that I

have spent so unproductive and false a life. 'Why have you run after vanity? why do you neglect to do that which your better nature has ever impelled you to accomplish? why are you even now masked?' These are the questions you are continually putting to me," Hugh said to her when the novel was just drawing to a close, and their retirement had continued some weeks without the return of Captain Dillingborough. "Isabel, you are better acquainted with me than you were; this novel, which might be called my 'life drama,' has let you into many a secret that I once determined you should never know. Do you not at length perceive what that influence is we spoke of some nights since? Have you not read the riddle?"

Isabel was silent save that her heart beat audibly, and the pulses of her hand, which Hugh held, were an answer louder than any words.

"Confess, Isabel; say you pity me."

"I can not—I can not; it would break my heart to pity you," she answered, convulsively, raising her hands and then clasping them over her bosom.

Two or three hasty strides Hugh took, as if he would tear himself from the spot; but the tempter was too strong to be overcome.

"I will throw away the flimsy mystification of the story, and tell all that I have so often hinted to you," he said, when he had returned and again taken her hand. "There is no reason why I should not; the past can not be altered—our fates are separate; at least, the confession will defend me from your reproaches. You have had, Isabel, my history from your father's lips, and his version of it is falser even than you think. He tells you I was a wayward and a vicious boy; but I was neither. I was high-spirited, courageous, hopeful; and so truthful was I, my eyes fill with tears as I look back upon myself. Perhaps I was fickle and infirm in purpose, but in changing from one ambition to

another, in quitting the navy for Oxford, and leaving Oxford suddenly, and applying to the law, and neglecting my studies for that profession in favor of literature, I believed at the time I was always actuated by a desire to find a vocation in which I could work honestly and with pleasure. My last choice was the right one. Had I been blessed with one influence, without which no man ever achieves greatness, I should have risen to be a poet. My first book, crude and unartistic as it was in many parts, was no ordinary production, and it was greeted as such; critics forbearing to lash its innumerable absurdities for the admiration they had for its excellencies. Systematically I studied, and read, and thought, and labored. Those who watched me wondered how I could toil so incessantly; yet I was not aware that I made great efforts, for my heart was in my task, and my exertions were only emotions of delight. At that time I went and paid a long visit to some relations in a beautiful part of the country. The master of the house I visited welcomed me with cordiality, and the whole family seemed as well pleased with me as I was delighted with them. Of this group of relations, one was a girl just blushing out of childhood, so very lovely that, if I did not know her still, now that she has reached all the charms of womanhood, I should think the picture of her in my mind was rather the result of my poetic imaginings than a truthful likeness. There was a wide difference in our ages; I was a man, already working in the world; she was a child, in a child's short dress, and with all the simple, trustful ways of childhood; and yet, from the moment we saw each other, we were companions.

"When I went back to London, it was to do two things —to work, and to dream about that child. I saw all that she was and would be, and with the designing cupidity of passion I determined to wait, and snatch the prize before any one else should ask for it. Another autumn, and again I was received by her family, and staid for two months in her

father's house. She had grown yet more strangely lovely; and with the increase of her personal graces her mental powers had developed. Poor fool that I was! I thought she was already often thinking about me, puzzling out my character, and preferring to ponder on that which was best of it.

"We read and conversed, gardened and made excursions through the country, just as you and I, Isabel, have been doing of late. Her father was not ignorant of the state of my affections, for I took care to be candid with him, and, had I not, he would, in all probability, have discovered it, for he usually managed to learn whatever concerned his common interests. He not only knew of my passion, but he was gratified with it, and even told me I might, when another year passed over, commence with activity my pursuit of his child's heart. Again I returned to London, and for another ten months occupied myself as I had done during the greater part of the preceding year. Whatever excess of impulsiveness was in my nature had disappeared before the steady resolve of my affections, and I applied myself to my studies with that regular assiduity which successful men of business deem a quality peculiar to themselves. Every night, after work was done, the refreshment came of thinking about my darling: how I remembered each of her thousand modulations of voice, her smiles of glee and archness, her glossy locks, what colors suited her best, her stories and merry sallies, the gladness with which she kissed me when I entered the house on the first day of my visit, the tears that were in her eyes the day that I departed! But I never again was invited to her father's roof. A better alliance was to be made; and she was given in marriage to an old man—older than her father.

"Then, indeed, I wanted purpose. I became an altered man. I sought admission into all kinds of society; lightness had left my heart, though it remained in my fancy; I

became vain and frivolous, neglected my art; and if I wrote, sought only to make money, that I might be able to appear before the world hand-in-glove with my social superiors; the simplicity of my nature left me with my purity of life, and I became a poor fluttering worldling. You speak to me of the good there is in me, and of what I may yet be. I am with you—so dearly loved. I am on the self-same ground where I loved you when it was no sin to do so; how, under such circumstances, should I be all unlike my former self?"

With an exclamation of agony Isabel rose, and, wringing her hands, cried, "Oh Hugh, would that I had known this! would that I had known this!"

"Hush! do not grieve. Let us look out from the spot we stand on, and learn the lesson of the distance. Let us hope, dear Isabel—let us hope."

For a few moments she seemed as if about to reply; but, with a nervous shudder, she turned away abruptly, and hurried across the lawn to the house, leaving Hugh to his meditations.

The sun was dying in the west, not in blazing glories; it was gently sinking down from a firmament of delicate amber hue, through which the paled stars looked serenely forth. There was peace above, and below there was rest also, on sloping plains, and woodland lines, and golden waving corn. But Hugh's heart throbbed as if it would burst, and his brain reeled with excitement.

Quitting the open lawn, he entered an avenue of limes that ran along one side of the Rectory grounds, and up and down its length, and under the covering of the leafy boughs he paced with rapid strides, gesticulating vehemently, and muttering, "She loves me! she loves me!" Very thick the foliage of the limes was; not a ray from the setting sun was able to penetrate it, and illumine Hugh's path.

But two eyes were watching him that knew his sin: not God's, though *they* were there, nor the devil's, though he was

hard by; they were human eyes, that peered from under the trees through the darkness. Cold, fiendish exultation, curiosity, and amusement were in them, and ever, as Hugh strode close past them, their owner held his breath, and drew back his face behind the tree against the stem of which he stood.

Soon Hugh recovered his self-possession, and went into the house to seek for his host and hostess. In the drawing-room there was no one; and in the dining-room there was no one; but in the library Hugh found the objects of his search—the old rector in his easy-chair, and Isabel sitting on his knee and embracing him.

"What, in the dark, without candles?" observed Hugh, as he entered.

"Yes, all in the dark, and without candles," said a voice through the open window from the garden.

"Why, it is Frederick!" cried Isabel, starting up from her husband's knee.

"The same—at your service, mamma," rejoined Captain Dillingborough, stepping in through the window and announcing his arrival. "I came by the coach from Strangford to Witherstone, and then—walked on. My dear father, a kiss. How do you do, Hugh?"

CHAPTER XXI.

ANOTHER PAIR OF EYES.

THERE was an end now to the *tête-à-tête* breakfasts—at least for a while. When Hugh entered the breakfast-room the morning after the occurrences mentioned at the close of the last chapter, instead of finding Isabel sitting alone with a book in her hand near the open window, he saw her standing by a side-table, and admiring the blossom of a newly-discovered plant to which Captain Dillingborough was directing her attention.

"A beautiful flower—is it not?" observed the captain, turning to Hugh.

"Frederick has brought it all the way from Sande Park for me," explained Isabel, not a little gratified with her son's offering.

They took their seats at the table on which the breakfast was spread, and throughout the repast Captain Dillingborough exerted himself to his utmost to keep up a cheerful conversation.

The society at Sande Park, and the queer people he had met in Lincolnshire and at Bath, he described in a style that would have helped to maintain the reputation of a professed humorist—a character Frederick Dillingborough certainly was not ambitious of; and when he had exhausted these, and twenty other topics of conversation, he still continued to pour forth a stream of pleasant commonplace. Isabel laughed at his quaint observations, and by words and animated glances manifested interest in what he was saying; but Hugh was moody, and wrapped up in himself, and did not make an effort to rouse himself into a more genial frame of mind.

An acute observer would perhaps have remarked that over and again, as Captain Dillingborough rattled away about ladies' dresses and the latest scandals, his glance passed rapidly from Hugh to Isabel, and from Isabel back to Hugh, and that his eyes possessed an unusual expression of eager curiosity. But neither Hugh nor Isabel were struck by these circumstances the former being apparently indifferent to what was going on, and the latter being fully occupied with the concealment of her thoughts.

The rector came down early that morning, perhaps in some degree out of compliment to his son; and, as soon as he made his appearance, the entire party adjourned from the breakfast-table to the garden, where Master Harrie, under the protection of his nurse, was already taking the air, and awaiting his regular matutinal presents of embraces and flattery.

"Oh, papa down? and without his nightcap?" observed the magnificent child, surveying his father with an air of thoughtful interest. The pensive expression of the boy's face made it seem as if he pondered how so old a man as the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough was the sire of such an infant as himself. And then, as his glance wandered to Isabel, and he raised himself on tiptoe to meet her kisses, his eyes said more distinctly than his lips would have done, "Yes, you are my mamma; but there is a riddle about my birth I can not solve. I must surely be the offspring of a mamma and a sentiment."

Harrie and his papa were the best possible friends, and in the country they spent a great deal of time together, conversing upon all kinds of questions affecting rural economy; and every day, after Harrie had spelt through his reading-lesson to Isabel, he went and read it off to his papa with astounding fluency.

"That child is the thing I love best on earth," said the rector, as he turned away with Hugh from Isabel and Frederick, whom Harrie had induced to accompany him to the pond which contained the gold and silver fish.

"You have good reason to be proud of him, for he is the handsomest boy I know," responded Hugh.

"Proud of him!" exclaimed the rector, contemptuously, indignant at receiving so unneeded an assurance; "proud of him! I should think so indeed! Let me tell you, you don't often find a father of my years with a boy like that! Just look at the little rascal as he is now jumping over his wheelbarrow. And he is all mine. He has got my forehead, my eyes, my profile, my mouth. There isn't a particle of Isabel in him."

Hugh assented in decided terms to the proposition that little Harrie was a marvel, and suggested that perhaps he was indebted to Isabel for some of his mental qualities.

"Perhaps so," the rector rejoined; "she is a charming

creature, all goodness and beauty; but—still—the Dillingboroughs never either lacked intellect or the nobler moral qualities."

Hugh was silent for fear he might make a fresh mistake if he ventured to move upon such delicate ground.

"Do you know," continued the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough, communicatively, "that much as I love that boy, and much as I have doted on him from the day of his birth to this moment, it cost me many a struggle before I could overcome my respect for the laws of primogeniture, and in his favor adopt the newfangled and republican notion that all a man's children ought to share alike in the distribution of his property? How to decide on this point sorely perplexed me for a long time. I pressed Isabel to give me her advice, for her judgment is, I need not assure you, wonderfully sound; but, though I urged her repeatedly, the dear girl, from a very honorable feeling that she ought not to influence me against the interests of my other children, declined to state her opinion.

"At length, however, I came to a final resolution; and acting upon it, I last year had a new will made, dividing my estate as near as may be equally among my three children. You see—(for you are one of the family, and, as Isabel's cousin, may naturally share some of my secrets)—my accumulated wealth is something upward of one hundred and ten thousand pounds. Some men call me a prosperous younger son. Well, I have no reason to complain, though, if I had been advanced to one of the wealthy bishoprics, which at one time I had good reason to hope would be the case, it would have been better with me; and, Heaven knows, I have been badgered enough by those rascally Radical journals, calling me a wolf and a bloodsucker! Still, I don't complain: *contentus parvo* is my motto.

"Well, to return: my will bequeaths thirty thousand pounds to each of my children, and twenty thousand pounds

to Isabel for her life, and after her death to be divided equally among my descendants living at the time of her demise.

"Isabel and Frederick are to be my executors and residuary legatees. Now tell me candidly, what do you think of this will?"

"In my opinion, it is not only a good one, but one that does you honor," Hugh answered, frankly and warmly.

"I am glad to hear you say so," rejoined the old man, his eyes twinkling as he spoke. "Frederick said almost the very same words. The change in my views made a great difference to his prospects; for, by the will I made before my second marriage, and destroyed last year, the thirty thousand pounds I now bequeath to Harrie, and the twenty thousand pounds I leave to Isabel, were to be his. It was a terrible cut down for him—from eighty thousand pounds to thirty thousand pounds. But he behaved very nobly about it. God bless him! He is a gallant boy, and all I hope is that his cousin Marmaduke may die unmarried, and leave the title and estates to him."

With this Christian wish for the welfare of his first-born son, the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough put his arm through Hugh's, and, turning off the gravel on to the grass, led him to meet Isabel and her child, who were advancing toward him from the fish-pond.

"Have you lost Frederick?" inquired the rector.

"Yes, he left us a minute since, and is on his way to Witherstone, to inquire of the postmaster about some letters he ought to have received by this time."

"Oh ho! letters! then I'll go and write mine, unless little Peterkin would like me to walk with him to see how our wall-fruit gets on."

Little Peterkin (Peterkin being Harrie's *play* name) signified his acceptance of the invitation by slipping his small right hand into the rector's left, and leading him off to the fruit trees that were to be inspected.

Once more Isabel and Hugh were together, and unfettered by the presence of a third person. As their eyes met, it was clear to each that the other was thinking of the disclosures of the previous night.

"Isabel, forget what I said last evening. Our happiness requires it—yours, for you have your duty to perform; mine, because, if you are ill at ease, I must be wretched. Do forget."

"One can not force memory any more than one can compel love," she answered, shaking her head sorrowfully.

"By a strong effort of will, banish the words from your mind. Do you not wish to forget them?"

She paused for several seconds—perhaps a minute—as if engaged in self-examination before she replied, slowly and pathetically, "No, Hugh, no. Indeed, I would remember them. I feel that to reflect on them will make me happy, and I trust you may find consolation, even encouragement, in the knowledge that I treasure them. I have confidence in myself, I have confidence in you; we have gazed many a stern thought boldly in the face, we will not fly from this gentle one. Be to me a brother, and I—I will cherish for you all the love God's laws permit. But jealously let us refrain from speaking on this subject; it is our bounden duty to do so; we can not chain our affections, but we can govern our tongues. Let me leave you now, dear Hugh, for I must be alone as much as I can this day; go, and join my child and husband, and find pleasure in their society, for they are mine. And, Hugh, when you think of me this morning, remember I am praying to our Father who is in heaven."

She moved away to the house, her eyes bright with tenderness, and her cheek pale with excitement; but her step was firm, and her lips closed together with pious resolution.

Even as Hugh stood there, trembling for her, perhaps trembling a little for himself, awe-struck by the purity and earnestness of *her* nature, feeling bitter contempt for the

feebleness and selfishness of *his own*, there mingled with his reverential admiration for her, and with the sense of his own unworthiness and humiliation, the triumphant knowledge that he had won the only heart he ever passionately loved; and at the very time she stated that she left him to pray, his heart exulted, for he knew the temptation she was about to implore God to save her from.

To join the rector and little Harrie as she suggested, to exchange opinions with the father about apricots and nectarines, and to run races with the child, he was unable; so, availing himself of a wicket gate, he, unobserved, let himself out of the Rectory grounds, and sauntered away through the lanes, unconscious and careless where his steps were leading him.

He was not aroused from his fit of musing till, by a circuitous route, he had reached a spot more than two miles distant from Copley Rectory, and then he was startled into recognition of the outer world by stumbling over the feet of a human form that lay, composed in sleep, on a bank by the wayside. The figure was that of a woman familiar to Hugh's eye.

"Hah! Madge," he exclaimed, with surprise, "what on earth has brought you here?"

Astonishment, and annoyance at the meeting, took possession of Madge's face immediately her eyes opened upon her benefactor, and, springing to her feet, she gave signs of an inclination to retire from his presence by a rapid flight.

"Don't be frightened," Hugh observed. "It is I—in the flesh, and not in the spirit. You are not dreaming."

"I do not doubt my eyes, sir, but it takes me aback that you have found me. I hope you are not angry with me for being in this out-o'-the-way place."

"For being a spy on my actions, you mean to say."

"Yes, sir; such is what I mean, perhaps, only I don't deserve so harsh a name. Indeed I do not."

"I am not displeased with you, my good friend," Hugh replied, kindly, and with a smile of amusement, for he was gratified, and his sense of the humorous was tickled by the vigilance with which Madge kept guard over him. "But your care must surely be thrown away upon me here, in this calm and delightful spot. No evil can approach me in this seat of innocence."

"Is it so very innocent, sir?"

"What do you think about the matter?"

"Alas! sir, I am here, and my heart is with me; and I wish that was pure o' sin. Wicked passions can steal on us every where, as the devil was able to plot and destroy even in Paradise," Madge answered, simply.

"Well, well," returned Hugh, avoiding Madge's earnest gaze, "let alone the sin, and talk about the danger."

"If there's a chance o' your falling into sin, you're in the worst o' perils, and that, sir, you don't need a poor untaught woman to teach you. But even with regard to other danger, I would bid you not to be too secure, for, sir, unless I am mistaken, and foolishly alarmed, there's a storm rising up in the distant sky."

"Why, Madge, you've taken to mystification since you left London. Do you hope to make a pot of money by fortune-telling? There, take my hand: see, I've crossed it with a piece of silver, and now for my destiny."

"Don't be mocking me, sir, for 'tis unlike you to sport with the feelings of others. 'Tis a cruel contest, when a weak woman like to me, all earnest and hot at heart, contends with the fleerings and jokes of her superior; for the light remarks are red-hot arrows darting through her, while her poor words, sent from a heavy breast, fall heavily long afore they've reached the mark. I am not a false, pretending conjuror, professing to show you the future; it isn't my head that speaks, but the love I bear you is that which makes me hover about you, and persecute you with my pursuits;

and the beatings of my bosom teach me what the weakness of my understanding won't permit me rightly to utter."

"What are you afraid of? Don't let your affection and gratitude to me deceive you."

"I will do my best to prevent them. And you, Mr. Falcon, let me implore *you* not to deceive yourself. You talk o' this being a sweet, *calm* spot. But it don't matter what the spot is near so much as what the mind is that considers it. Don't think me bold, sir; don't punish me for being over bold; but bear with me while I ask you if you were calm last night after you separated from the lady i' the garden, and strode up and down i' the shady walk, muttering, and striking your arms about wildly. You thought you were alone; you little suspected any mortal eyes were upon you, but—"

"You were watching me," observed Hugh, finishing the sentence for her.

"Yes, sir, I was watching you," said Madge, composedly.

"Well, come, have you nothing else to say?" Hugh asked, thinking that Madge checked herself in her revelations from prudential considerations.

"Nothing more, sir, but this, which you will, I feel sure, see the good sense of. If I could watch you without your knowing it, *why shouldn't others?* Mind, sir, I don't say that others did; I don't assert that there was any mortal but me regarding you; so don't let my words cause you to suspect any man, woman, or child. Still I repeat, if I could, *why should not others?*"

As they carried on this conversation, they proceeded slowly down the lane, and just as Madge concluded her words of caution with impressive emphasis, they came to a piece of ground that was the entrance to a sheep-walk, that ran through the country for many miles.

On this space was what is popularly named a gipsy en-

campment. Two or three caravans, as many tilted carts, a lean horse or two, half a dozen scrubby ponies, and a few dingy asses, constituted the locomotive means possessed by the wandering republic, which consisted of tinkers, and hawkers of various utilities, among which crockery and haberdashery were prominent. At a distant part of the encampment a group of men watched a large boiler, suspended from four crossed stakes, over a fire of wood and turf; and in all directions were to be seen women and children, who, whether they were working or playing, were evidently enjoying the country air and scenery.

"These are my people," observed Madge, with a motion of obeisance to Hugh.

"They seem a happy company," returned Hugh, eyeing them, and wondering by what tie his companion was connected with them.

"They are decent and honest folk, without one single exception. Gentry are apt to look upon such like as vagabonds; but, sir, how are London workmen ever to get a real good sniff o' the country unless they break away in the autumn, when there is a chance of finding employment i' the harvest-time, when labor is scarce?"

"How long do you remain here?"

"We move to-night."

"Whither bound?"

"The most part will be about in the country some weeks longer."

"And *you*?"

"I go straight back to London."

"Immediately?"

"Yes, sir, immediately. 'Tis no use my waiting here," Madge replied, with a sigh.

Having taken leave of his strange friend, Hugh retraced his steps to Copley, and was fortunate enough to reach the Rectory before the hour of luncheon, and consequently in

time to prevent his absence from attracting attention. Captain Dillingborough also had returned from Witherstone with his letters and a batch of new books.

Week after week Hugh prolonged his visit at Copley, and day by day he and Isabel were drawn closer together. Perhaps some readers of these pages may be shocked when they are informed that these weeks were the happiest, by far the happiest, Isabel had ever known—in which she surrendered herself to the pleasure of being loved, as for a few short months, years back, she had given herself up to the delight of loving one who was incapable of fully repaying, or even understanding her affection.

When it is considered how easy it is to pass severe judgments on our neighbors; how agreeable it is to do so when their conduct affords a fair pretext for our virtuous severity; how inexpressibly delightful it is to do so when their misdemeanors are such as we ourselves are in little danger of committing; and, lastly, when it is considered how very few in this barren world are tempted as Isabel was, there can be no doubt that the folly, the weakness, and the indiscretion of Mrs. Harrie Dillingborough, in cherishing love for her cousin and avowing it to him, have already been condemned in many quarters with that peculiar vehemence which very good people alone have a right to indulge in.

Well, Isabel must bear the censures; she had the enjoyment, and for such enjoyment how few are there who would refuse to pay the price!

Never in her life had Isabel suffered under positive unkindness; her paltry father had always treated her with much paternal gentleness; her stepmother had always behaved to her with justice and unaggressive coldness; and the Reverend Harry Dillingborough, fine old gentleman as he was, had never failed to act toward her with consideration and tenderness. But till she loved Hugh she had never known herself the one object of a true man's noblest affections.

To long for sympathy, to sigh for a friend who should admire her for other qualities than her beauty, who would appreciate the trials of her position, and encourage her to bear up against them, and never to have her craving satisfied, had been her hard lot. Now, how great was the change! Another atmosphere surrounded her, another life-blood leaped through her frame, a new music was in the wind and murmuring trees, and a fresh light came to her from every object in creation.

CHAPTER XXII.

A FEW MORE STAGES.

FROM the close of the London season till the following Christmas, Everitt Brookbank led a perturbed and very unsatisfactory existence. At the time, he deemed himself a very miserable being; and at this present day, when reviewing that stormy period, he avows his astonishment that he perceived only a small portion of his wretchedness.

With the departure of Frances Leatheby from town, there went from his life all that pleasurable though overpowering excitement which had been one of the immediate consequences of his eager pursuit of that fascinating and ingenuous young lady. For four-and-twenty hours her valedictory epistle gave him unalloyed delight, but soon it tortured more than it gratified him. She was not his; she was free to give herself to another. Perhaps already the man destined to win her hand was by her side, and she was yielding to the influences that were to overcome her.

How many with rank, and wealth, and all bodily, and intellectual, and moral charms, were there in the world who would fight to the death for such a prize! And who was he, that he should feel secure of the victory, or even entertain a hope of it? And the response made to this inquiry was re-

plete with self-contempt; for, though Everitt was by no means in the habit of underrating his own excellences, love, when tempestuous and unreasoning as a young man's ought to be, is especially the power to plunge an ardent youth into convulsive, not to say tetanic fits of modesty. Moreover, in the presence of a legion of rivals, Everitt would have maintained his self-possession, and, with bold heart, have hurled defiance at each one of them; but to think with calmness on the superiority of opponents we have never seen but only imagined, is far more difficult than to grapple with the foes who stand face to face before us.

Other causes, also, besides the more interesting anxieties of his heart, combined to make him ill at ease, and among them was a very disagreeable one—pecuniary embarrassment. That he was down in the books of various West End tradesmen for sums which the whole of his next year's income would not clear off, was a trifle to a gentleman of his position and malady; but he was surrounded by a host of those minor creditors that always track the prodigal, who clamored for immediate payment; and instead of having the means to satisfy their not unnatural demands, Everitt was almost without funds for his daily expenses, having already overdrawn his allowance from his father's banker, and more than once availed himself of the service of those purveyors of coin who, for a trifling consideration, minister to the wants of spendthrifts.

All this to Everitt, who in the whole course of his life had never been necessitated to avoid a creditor or talk off a tradesman, was extremely humiliating. For the weakness and sinful disregard of principle of his college associates, who, for temporary gratification, encumbered themselves with debts and liabilities, he had ever expressed unqualified contempt; and now, after having escaped the clutches of Cambridge usurers, and having seen something of the world, he found himself in the ignominious position of a dunned man, and saw

that he had succumbed to those temptations he had for so long held to be powerless over him.

Disposing, at a sacrifice, of the horse he had possessed for only a few weeks, discharging his clerk, and setting his affairs in the best order he was able, he went down to Devonshire to visit his father, having first declined several invitations to different parts of the kingdom on various pretexts, but, it is to be feared (albeit he was an affectionate son), from the one sole consideration that the condition of his purse would not allow him to travel about the country and face the expenses of English hospitality.

Much did old Captain Brookbank enjoy the return of his boy, and with very fitting pursuits did they occupy themselves in the most beautiful of all England's counties. Fishing in the noble rivers, making excursions to Dartmoor and Tynemouth, running along the coast under the red cliffs, paying visits to friends at those picturesque sea-side villages with which Devonshire abounds, and in a small yacht, which the captain and another retired naval officer combined to keep at Sidmouth, careering about on the smiles of the ocean, Everitt and his father passed their time; the former at times enjoying himself, and the latter, not discerning all his boy's uneasiness, very much delighted.

On occasions Everitt was silent and gloomy, and evinced signs of restlessness; and then his father would utter some expressions of sympathy, so manly and cheerful, and cheering in their simplicity, that the young man was compelled to smile, and feign more contentment than he felt.

One morning early in September, Everitt and the captain breakfasted at home, the repast being seasoned with the columns of the Morning Post, which paper Everitt, for reasons best known to himself, had, before leaving town, ordered should be regularly sent to him. The captain was the first down that day, and had possessed himself of the chief contents of the journal before the appearance of his son, who, immedi-

ately on entering the room, snatched up one of the sheets and commenced perusing it almost before saluting his father.

The captain kept his eye on Everitt, and saw him proceed to the fashionable intelligence without even glancing at the articles. The color sprung to his cheek. At last her name was there. "Mrs. and Miss Leatheby arrived in town yesterday, at 16 —— Street, on their return from Hove Manor. To-morrow they leave for Baden-Baden."

Everitt made no allusion to the announcement, and the captain allowed no observation to escape his lips with regard to it at that time; but, when he had disposed of his eggs, and toast, and coffee, he quitted the room, leaving his son poring over a theatrical criticism. Soon, however, the old man returned, and, going up to Everitt, slipped a paper into his hand—it was a check for one hundred pounds.

Startled, and for the moment not apprehending the object of this act of liberality, Everitt looked up at his father, who stood, leaning over him, with an arm laid across his shoulders.

"Go, boy, go! Don't waste any more time here. Be off to Baden-Baden," the old sailor said, with tears in his honest eyes.

"My dear father!"

"Hush! hush! don't say any thing, or we shall be crying like children. Write to me as often as you can, for when you are away from me I'm always thinking of you."

As he said this the old man lowered his head yet a few inches, and kissed his boy upon the forehead and the lips.

Before another day and night had passed, Everitt was on board a steamer, and the shores of Albion were to him as erst they were to Childe Harold. But his voyage and journeyings were fruitless, for, on arriving at Baden-Baden, he did not find Frances ready to be met by him accidentally, nor could he gain any tidings of her movements, though he sought for information in every quarter where it appeared there was any hope of getting intelligence.

Furious at having been deceived by a lying newspaper paragraph, and the next moment restraining his indignation with the reflection that Frances might, in the course of another four-and-twenty hours, make her appearance, he chafed and fretted away a fortnight or three weeks, when he so far overcame a strong dislike he felt to applying to Lord Brigden for instruction that he penned a very entertaining and diplomatic letter to that nobleman, chatting in a careless strain on a thousand and one different topics, and by the way begging his lordship to transmit a packet of English news, and to state, among other things, if he could, where and how Mrs. and Miss Leatheby were consuming their days.

To this artful and artistic epistle Everitt received the following brief response:

"DEAR EVERITT,—What a ridiculous mistake for you to make! People often deem it advisable, when they go abroad, to publish their intention to visit countries they do not mean to enter. Mrs. L. and her child are in the south of France, with Mrs. L.'s unfortunate brother. They always hang out a false flag when they travel to him. I trust you are amusing yourself to your satisfaction. Of course, you did not leave England on purpose to run after this mare's nest. *If you write again*, direct as before, for my letters are forwarded to me daily. Yours affectionately, BRIGDEN.

Colne, Perthshire."

Something wondrous like an oath escaped Everitt's lips as he laid down this epistle after having read it.

"——! How I hate the man! What a cold-blooded, insolent villain he is! always discovering me in some absurd blunder, and exulting over my awkwardness. His greatest delight is to show me that I am not so shrewd, and worldly, and sinful as himself," exclaimed Everitt, with a vehemence that displayed the warmth of his feelings.

But blustering could do no good; so Everitt, without delay, packed up his trunk and returned to Devonshire, where his father received him with many expressions of commiseration and sorrow for his disappointment—albeit the old man was not entirely displeased with the mishap which restored his son to him for a few more weeks.

By the close of October, however, Everitt was once more established in his chambers in the Temple, the fiction of "getting up for term" having been yet again had recourse to by the young man as a reason for tearing himself away from the captain's embraces.

The first important piece of business Everitt performed that term was to call at Mrs. Leatheby's house, to inquire if she had returned to town; but this proceeding, instead of putting a fee into the barrister's pocket, led to the removal of one from it into the hand of Mrs. Leatheby's butler, who, with his wife, was in possession of the town mansion.

"Mrs. Leatheby still in the country, I see?" observed Everitt to John. "The windows have taught me that."

John bowed, and assented to the justice of Everitt's remarks.

"Do you know when the ladies will be in town?"

John bowed again, could not answer exactly, but would inquire of his wife. It was at this crisis—just as John turned away to go in search of his wife—that the transmission of coin alluded to took place. Truly, love is an exhaustive passion.

Mrs. John, now coming upon the scene, and receiving the wink from her lord and master, threw the desired light on the points of uncertainty. Mrs. Leatheby would not be in town till after Newyear's day; for, immediately she should land on her return from the Continent, it was her intention to proceed to ———shire, to pass some weeks at Mrs. Ambrose Hill's place.

With this information, Everitt turned away from the door,

and walked slowly on, meditating what his next step ought to be, when it suddenly struck him that the good city of Brandon, and also Wolton Hall, the seat of Lord Crayford, were situated in the same county as Mrs. Ambrose Hill's place.

Now why, Everitt inquired of himself, should not Mr. Brookbank have business to transact in the month of December at Brandon? and when at Brandon, why should he not go on to Wolton Hall, to which house he had been, on more than one occasion, cordially invited by its noble owner? and being so located in the county, why should he not manage to induct himself into Frances's presence, since he already had some slight acquaintance with her entertainer, Mrs. Ambrose Hill? So engrossed was Everitt with the brilliant daring of this scheme, and with composing the note he would forthwith write and send to Lord Crayford, that he did not hear a voice which called him twice by his name distinctly.

"Are you plotting murder?" observed the owner of the voice, crossing the street, and arresting the progress of our friend.

"Ha! Mr. Harvey! how do you do?"

"I was half afraid you were bent on giving me the cut of abstraction," rejoined the merchant, with a laugh. "Why have you not been to see me lately?"

"I have been spending a good deal of time in Devonshire with my father, and I have been in Germany also."

"A very good reply, and I am no longer offended at your absence from Slaughton. Have you any engagement for Sunday next?"

"None."

"Then dine with me—there's a good boy. Come, if you will, in time for the afternoon service. We shall be alone, but I have something besides myself to amuse you, in the shape of two new paintings, and a folio of exquisite engravings."

"I am obliged to you; and it will give me great pleasure to be with you."

"Then good-by. I am off to the city."

As he uttered these words, the man of business stepped into his brougham, which had drawn up by his side while he was conversing with Everitt, and in another ten seconds he was on his way to the city, having left his young friend slightly surprised and gratified by the interview.

"What makes him so civil to me? I am no capitalist," communed Everitt with himself. "But it ought not to astonish me, for there is no doubt he is a man of good taste."

With this complacent remark, Everitt for the time dismissed from his mind Mr. Harvey and his invitation, and returned to the consideration of his plans to render Lord Crayford subservient to his interests. Everitt had a very slight acquaintance with that hospitable and eccentric nobleman; but, from the little he did know of him, he saw no reason to fear a repulse of his advances. So, dropping in at his club, our friend penned a judicious note, announcing to the noble owner of Wolton Hall his intention of being at Brandon on or about a certain day, and his readiness to pass a day or two under his lordship's roof.

By return of post, the following characteristic reply reached Everitt:

"Wolton Hall.

"My Dear Brookbank,

"Hospitality is a Christian virtue; the heathen world never properly understood the thing; but in the preaching of the early Church, when religion came from simple hearts, and not mitred heads, it was exalted to the highest pinnacle of human excellence—or, rather, what human excellence ought to be. And in such an important point I should be sorry to be found lacking; for what is man but grass? and what are his vain imaginations but a vapor?

"Come by all means, and I'll do my best to make you enjoy yourself, for my household, though pious, is not gloomy; for I hate Calvinism as much as I abominate Popery!

"I forget whether you are musical. If you play on the cornet-à-piston or violin, I could make you useful in my band, which I think you'll allow, in the way of harmonic recreation, can not be equaled out of London. You smoke, of course! I've just got in stock—sixty boxes of the best regalias—first rate! So we'll make a 'blow' up in my turning-room. At the turn of the year I shall have to be present at some missionary meetings in this division of the county; if you could go with me and make a few speeches, you would be serving a good master.

"We are, all of us, too apt to neglect our duties, to fall into degrading sensuality, and become like the beasts which perish.

"Believe me, dear Brookbank, your very earnest and affectionate friend, JOHN CRAYFORD.

"P.S.—Lady Crayford unites with me in assurances that you'll be received here with a hearty good welcome. You will find her a very accomplished woman, and also a very handsome one; but, I am sorry to say, she is much more worldly than I am, her heart being turned to vanity. But perhaps sickness and severe affliction may do something for her! How strangely are we constituted! How one vessel is made to honor, and another to dishonor. J. C."

Not a little astonished and convulsed with laughter was Everitt with this literary production, for his intercourse with his correspondent had been very trifling, and he was almost entirely ignorant of the peculiarities of Lord Crayford's character. The remarkable signature of "John Crayford" of course attracted Everitt's attention, and he attributed it rightly to a conscientious dislike on the part of the owner to the more brief and haughty style generally used by peers.

"Well, never mind, I've got the invitation, and that's a great thing. If more amusement and profit follow from it than I had hoped, why, so much the better," remarked Everitt, putting the letter into his desk.

The next day was Sunday, and a lovely day it was, as millions of six-day workers were able gratefully to testify. At the afternoon service of St. Stephen's, Slaughton, Everitt was present, as well as Mr. Harvey and our other Slaughton friends. As the congregation dispersed, Everitt exchanged a few words of greeting with Miss Nugent, and George and Mary Hassell, who combined to scold him for deserting them for so long a time. Perhaps it was a groundless fancy; but, as Everitt shook hands with Kate Nugent, who was leaning on George Hassell's arm, it struck him that her countenance was unusually pale and worn, and bore signs of mental trial.

Dinner at Slaughton Park was always in accordance with the good taste that pervaded all the arrangements of that establishment; and Everitt, who, though not an epicure, had that power of appreciating the good things of life, the want of which Charles Lamb affirmed was an indication of unsound judgment, admitted to himself before the dessert was placed on the table that to dine *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Harvey was a very pleasant way of spending a quiet Sunday.

"Now that wine I am sure you will like," said the merchant, passing the claret-jug to his guest; "if you don't admire the first sip, take a second before you pass judgment."

Everitt made the two trials, and then signified his approval by raising the vase of thin glass that contained the delicious juice once again to his lips with an expressive nod.

"Well done for the poetry of action," observed Mr. Harvey, with a slight laugh.

"Silence is language sometimes."

"I question whether it often means consent, although the popular saying is against me."

"For *consent* read *submission*."

"But what an awful negative is the sullen silence of submission!"

"When the tongue cleaves to the roof of the mouth in the presence of a line of cold bayonets."

"Heaven help the oppressed! Fill your glass, Brookbank, in honor of the sentiment."

Everitt obeyed and drank the toast of oppressed nationalities in silence.

"So your friend Brigden is in Parliament once more," said Mr. Harvey, breaking the pause.

"*My friend!* Why give him that name?"

"I saw you once speaking to him in the street."

Everitt laughed.

"I am glad to see him there."

"Are you?" (with surprise).

"I mean, glad that his place is not occupied by another. My young friend, you acted like a man, and I am proud of you."

"I scarcely understand you" (with more surprise).

"Don't be alarmed," continued Mr. Harvey, with a smile. "Lord Brigden told me all about it; and, really, it did me good to see him take so much genuine pleasure in recounting a story that told so much in the favor of human nature."

"Exemplified its folly, his lordship would say."

"Really he did not seem to think so. Most unquestionably he admires you."

"I am obliged to him."

"You do not like him?"

"Do you?"

"I am as amiably disposed to him as I can be to any one whose immorality excites my contempt and hatred."

"I have a violent animosity toward him, which I can not account for satisfactorily. I try my best to persuade myself that it arises from my loathing of his vices, a belief we can usually get up when we disagree with men of lax principles;

but, in all candor, I am afraid the devil has something to do with my antagonism to Lord Brigden."

"Did this state of feeling influence you in any way to reject his offer?"

Everitt paused for a few seconds' consideration, and then answered deliberately, "Honestly, I can say it did not; and that I declined his proposal sincerely upon moral grounds. I did not cherish such hot dislike to him at that time. Do you credit my assurance?"

"I would believe any thing you told me. You are the incarnation of truth," exclaimed Mr. Harvey, warmly.

"What do you wish to do in life?" he inquired, after a pause, which Everitt did not seem inclined to break.

"I have no very definite ambition. Once I was vain enough to think I should try to be a writer."

"Naturally. I don't believe there is a young man in all England, not an author, who has not been restrained from exhibiting himself in print either by some intellectual deficiency or fear of failure."

"That is a bold assertion."

"It is a true one. The malevolence displayed in society to writers, the tardiness with which their merits are recognized, and the stinginess with which they are praised, especially by men, must be chiefly attributed to the jealousy of those multitudes who have made attempts in literature and failed, or, wishing to try their strength, have not had courage to do so."

"I am inclined to think your remarks, though severe, are just."

"What have you ever written?"

"Only a few newspaper and magazine articles, that were published under Hugh Falcon's auspices."

"He is a clever man."

"And quite an honest one," put in Everitt, warmly.

"Oh, I see no reason why a Conservative should not be

honest," replied Mr. Harvey, with a cheery laugh. "I believe what makes me so hated by the tricksters of the Feudality party is their knowledge that I have such perfect faith in the sincerity and honor of the mass of those whose views they advocate. I reflect upon the past with an affection so ardent and tender that it may be called love."

"Would you like to discover yourself sprung from an ancient and noble house?"

"Unquestionably. It would give me great pleasure to look back, through centuries upon centuries, on amiable family groups, composed of those who, with myself, sprung from a great common ancestor. A man of humble extraction has the same affections as those who are honorably descended. To turn from love of the past to love of the future—you'll smile, perhaps, when I tell you that it was once the dream of my life to found a family, and that I desired to do so, not out of a passion to make my name conspicuous, but that generations after generations of my descendants might look back to me, their old progenitor, with filial affection. It is from this, and a similar sentiment, if I recollect rightly, that Cicero draws one of his most beautiful arguments for the immortality of the soul. Ah! but that hope has vanished, like many others."

"The poor and lowly-born can look back to one great house in the past with pride—a holy pride—and deepest love; I mean, to the Church."

"Most truly! most truly!" assented the merchant, with devout gratitude.

"But with regard to the writers, do you not think the ill-will borne to them in society arises in no small degree from the violent party-feeling they arouse on all questions, religious, philosophical, and social, in the exercise of their functions?"

"Unquestionably. Another difficulty, too, of their position is that they are powerful, but have not the ensigns of au-

thority, and, consequently, they are surrounded by enemies, as the mighty must always be, without the pomps and glittering adornments with which rulers fascinate the imaginations and win the affections of the vulgar—by which term I mean the 'multitudes.' As to the charges of dishonesty brought against those of them who fight in the arena of politics, I think them, to a great extent, without foundation. Venal rogues there are, of course, in every profession—even that of statesmanship!—but my opinion (the result of long experience) is, that journalism, for the most part, is carried on by men who are honest and zealous, as well as talented."

"It is a pity they indulge in sarcasm and rancorous invective as they do? How much wiser and more profitable to humanity it is for an advocate to put forth his arguments than to display his animosities!"

"One portion of literature has of late been especially used as an outlet for spleen and prejudice: I allude to political novels. There is one author, whose loathsome vocation is to vitiate the morals of the lower classes, and to pander to the sensuality of a few degraded individuals of the higher, who does nothing but depict the aristocracy as given up to coarse debauchery and the gratification of the meanest selfishness. All good men are sad at this, and are glad to find excuses for the readers of such foolish and sinful trash in the ignorance and pitiable suffering which are the fate of so many of the poor. But it is difficult for charity to speak so leniently of a literature of quite an opposite school—those fashionable novels which delight in exaggerating the defects of the humbler orders of the community, and in attributing to them, as peculiar and distinctive characteristics, those bad qualities which they possess in common with all mankind. Open any one of these works, and your eye can not traverse six pages without being shocked by the narrow-mindedness and unchristian sentiments of the writer. A nobleman and a manufacturer are brought in contrast upon the scene: the

noble has elegance of figure and classic features; the manufacturer has all the physical marks of a vulgar nature: the nobleman has noble aspirations and refined tastes; the manufacturer is gifted only with cunning and with brutal instincts: the nobleman expends his magnificent fortune in 'ameliorating the condition of the peasantry;' the manufacturer wrings his wealth from starving thousands, and then gloats over the miseries of his perishing slaves: the nobleman worships genius; the manufacturer despises intellect and fawns on money: when they end their days, the nobleman sinks into rest, regretted by his country and lamented by his tenantry; the manufacturer is struck dead with apoplexy upon learning that his long-concealed forgeries are at last discovered, or he dies from overeating himself at a public dinner."

Everitt's hearty laugh signified his acknowledgment of the truth of this sketch.

"The same contrast is insisted on if a school scene is described. Patrician's son and tradesman's son are little boys aged eleven years; the former has the lofty brow and contour which mark the aristocracy, and imaginative blue eyes; the latter has a low forehead, a hideous mouth, and a squint: the tradesman's son is always bullying children smaller than himself; the patrician's son is ever getting his eyes blacked in defense of the weak: the noble boy devotes his time and money to the cultivation of the manly faculties; whereas the shopkeeper's boy partakes of no better amusement than sucking lollipops from morning till night, and finally is birched and expelled for taking money out of another boy's desk.

"Now all this may make us laugh, but you must agree with me that, if it is vulgar and contemptible to rant 'about the bloated aristocracy,' it is not less so to represent the industrial classes as composed of vile, ignorant, and presumptuous people."

"But, even in respect to class prejudices, we are improving—as in every thing else."

"You believe in the present?"

"*Do I not?*" rejoined Everitt, warmly. "It makes me indignant to hear people, who themselves *do* nothing for the times, perseveringly railing against them. I do not know toward which school I am the more hostile—the one whose teaching is that all beauty is in the past, or the other, whose creed is, that if we wish to think happily of man, we must fix our eyes on the future.

"'What have you done?' these advocates of the past cry out; 'these vaunted improvements of yours! what are they? Are men better, more beautiful in their lives for them?' And if you answer 'Yes, they are,' they look upon you as moonstruck or idiotic. Then the longers after the future set up their cry, 'Undoubtedly we are degraded beasts, devouring each other; unquestionably this earth is a hell; but—wait a little longer.'

"Certainly, to judge from the statements we English put in print about ourselves, we are, beyond comparison, the most ignominious herd that ever chanced to be a great nation; we have no intellect, no love of the beautiful, no brotherly charity; we marry wives only that we may maltreat them; we get children only that we may beat them; by turns we are tyrants and slaves; we are always blustering cowards, and almost always hypocritical knaves."

"I trust we are not quite so bad as that, though the newspapers would persuade us we are; and, as you say, this generation has done something. Those unhappy minds that love to ponder on the painful features of our community, and to enlarge on every case of destitution that comes before the police courts, ought to remember that, in the year 1815, there 'lived in Calmet's Buildings, which consisted of a small court of twenty-four houses in the immediate vicinity of Portman Square, more than seven hundred Irish in the most complete distress and profligacy; that this court was totally neglected by the parish; that it was never cleaned; and that

people were afraid to enter it from dread of contagion; and also, that in George Yard, Whitechapel, there were two thousand people occupying forty houses in a similar state of wretchedness.' Our poor need education; but Lord Brougham's (Mr. Brougham's) celebrated Education Committee 'found that in the metropolis there were a hundred and twenty thousand children without the means of education!'

"Something has been done for religious liberty, as Catholics and Dissenters can testify; and, as a consequence, sectarian rancor, that once set cottage against cottage in every village in the land, has died, or is dying out. In law reform much remains to be done; but we have wiped out that bloody criminal code of the past, on which humanity shudders to think, and debtors are no longer treated with a severity beyond that which punishes the worst malefactors.

"Many frightful social enormities still exist, but some we have banished that exceeded any which yet remain. We no longer flog our common soldiers to death, or tax the poor man's meal, or permit the factory child to be killed with toil. The health and comfort of the humblest in the nation are considered by the Legislature; the sanitary condition of our towns is being rapidly improved, and every laborer in the kingdom can call to his bed of sickness a highly-educated and accomplished medical practitioner.

"A wise enactment has removed from the Established Church a scandalous power, and conferred upon it an inestimable boon, so that never again shall we hear of a rector tithing the wages of a poor laborer, and throwing him into jail for the sum of four shillings and fourpence. Our morals are sadly imperfect, but our manners are so improved that the most riotous coteries no longer need the tyrannical restraint of dueling.

"The post-office, the diffusion of printed literature, the conveniences for traveling—in the railway and the steamer—and for transmitting intelligence, in the telegraph, the

greater security of life by the improvement of the police, and the general movement to forward the cultivation of the refining arts, are points worthy of consideration. Some may call all these facts contemptible trifles; I can not think them so."

"And when," observed Everitt, "the question is put, 'Are we the nearer to God?' the heart of each man must give him answer."

CHAPTER XXIII.

WOLTON HALL.

It was December, and the weather was mild for the month, when Everitt alighted at the chief entrance of Wolton Hall from a carriage which Lord Crayford had sent to meet him at a neighboring railway station. Having, as he approached the mansion, made a survey of the well-timbered park and the architecture of the hall, and admitted to himself that the aspect of "the place" was equal to his expectations, Everitt soon found himself in the vestibule of the house, and in the presence of its noble proprietor.

Lord Crayford was a tall, bluff, and stalwart man, considerably over fifty years of age, and endowed with an honest, well-looking face, remarkable for an abundance of beard and mustache, and low forehead. His head was bald at the top, and what little hair there was on it was cropped short. His costume was simple rather than imposing, consisting, as it did, of loose blue cloth trowsers, and one of those curt and rough coats that used to be called pea-jackets. An absence of waistcoat left to view a wide extent of a red-striped shirt that was a favorite pattern with his lordship.

When in London, and on certain state occasions, Lord Crayford's dress was in accordance with popular taste; but in the country, where he passed almost the whole of his life,

it was his pleasure and custom to clothe himself in the appropriate garments of an amateur workman.

"Brookbank, my boy, charmed to see you under my roof—delighted to behold you. Jackson, take those traps up to Mr. Brookbank's room. Sharp's the word, you lazy rogue! don't stand staring about you there. James, my watch has stopped, and this clock is out of order, so run and see what's the time by the great clock."

"It's half past five," said Everitt, referring to his watch.

"Then there's half an hour till dinner," returned his lordship. "Dinner at six—punctual. Now, what will you do till then? What say you to a smoke? just one cigar, for the sake of getting an appetite?"

"Thank you," said Everitt, excusing himself, "I never smoke before dinner; and it will be necessary for me to spend a few minutes on my toilet—at least, if I am to have the pleasure of dining with Lady Crayford."

"My dear boy, my dear boy," returned Lord Crayford, with an expression in his voice and manner of parental pity, "observe the lily of the valley; it toils not, neither does it spin; little care does it take of its personal appearance; no one ever heard of it having a fifty guinea dressing-case, and spending hours of precious time in making itself interesting—and yet how sweet and lovely it is! Depend upon it, my dear young friend, the more we leave ourselves as Nature made us, the more charming we are. For my part, in the bosom of my family, I dine in my shirt-sleeves if I feel so inclined; but still do *you* please your own feelings. Ha! Jackson, you back? Have you taken Mr. Brookbank's trunk up stairs?"

"Yes, my lord," the man answered.

"Jackson," said Lord Crayford, with a solemn and faltering voice, "Jackson, I am deeply sorry. You know what I allude to; you need not me to tell you. Jackson, I am deeply humiliated; do assure me of your forgiveness."

"Indeed, my lord, I don't understand—"

"Hush! hush, Jackson! it is very kindly intended on your part to pretend you have forgotten, but you can't deceive me; and even in such a matter as this, you ought to be truthful. I just now spoke to you violently, and called you 'a lazy rogue!'"

"Oh, pray, my lord, don't wex yourself about so immaterial a think," replied the footman, magnanimously.

"Jackson, you are all goodness; the Christian spirit is strong in you," returned the master, with tears rolling down his bluff cheeks. "Think of this, Brookbank; five minutes, ay, little more than two minutes since, I hurled opprobrious and scandalous words at that patient and noble individual, and he not only forgives me, but actually his temper has not been ruffled by the insult. If any man living dared to call me 'a lazy rogue,' by ——, if I would not knock him down as flat as a flounder, and then pick him up and kick him from here to Newmarket. And you, Brookbank—I dare say, if Jackson had called you a rogue, and ordered you to bustle about, you'd have taken up that hunting-whip, and thrashed him till he was black and blue all over his body. How different it is with Jackson! How different it is with all what the world calls the lower orders! We oppress the poor man, but he does not complain; we smite him on the one cheek, and he turns to us the other also; we persecute him, and he blesses us; we despise him, and he loves us."

"Beautiful!" "Charming!" "So like his lordship!" and half a score other exclamations of approval, were uttered by several voices as this little oration came to an end. Everitt looked round, and saw an assemblage of all the servants of the establishment, whom the arrival of a visitor had brought to the immediate vicinity of the entrance-hall, and whom their master's voice had allured to come out from their hiding-places.

"Jackson, your hand," said Lord Crayford, when the sounds of applause had subsided.

"Oh, my lord, you do me too much honor."

"At this moment, Jackson, don't 'my lord' me; at no time do I like to be addressed by my vain title, but just now I can't bear it. Shake hands with me, and call me 'Friend Crayford.'"

In obedience to this command, Jackson extended his hand, and gave his master a cordial gripe, saying, "Friend Crayford, you're a man after my own heart, and there is no mistake about it. Indeed, my lord—I mean, my friend, I am honest in what I say, and I trust you will not trouble yourself any longer about any dear-hoggating remarks you may chance to have let slip."

This interesting reconciliation having been effected, Lord Crayford patted Jackson on the back, called him "a trump," and, by way of conferring one more distinction upon him, exclaimed, "Brookbank, shake hands yourself with that man, for he is an honor to human nature. Dash my buttons! the calf of his leg, which is the finest I ever saw a footman have, is not finer in its way than his soul."

Everitt, in compliance with the request, shook hands with the blushing Jackson, and then, the assembly having dispersed, followed a servant, who conducted him to his apartment.

"His lordship allus is so," observed the man—an acute provincial—when he had performed in the character of valet various services for Everitt.

"Indeed! you must like him very much!" was the answer.

"Well, sir, we do! all things considered, the people hereabouts may be said to love him; for he is allus as you saw him just now. Perhaps in some things he might be better; and without a doubt it is a pity that my lord don't know nothink about money, for the manner in which he gets took in is perfectlie absurd. But then he have my lady to look after him."

"Oh! Lady Crayford keeps you in order?"

"You aren't far wrong in thinking she do, sir; and I must

say, she manages right well, and that without her every think would go to rack and ruing. Bless you, sir, my lord can't make nobody mind him; he'll fly in a passion sometimes, and swear and cuss as if all hell was let loose; but then the next moment he begs our pardings and axes forgiveness. The werry children won't obey him, and he ha'rn't got heart to lick 'em when they go wrong. My eyes, what a row there was only yesterday! Since you weren't here to see it, you can never believe me. It happened this wise, sir: the little 'un, I mean the Honorable Arthur Crayford, which is only nine years old, and hasn't been sent to school, misdemeaned himself shameful, giving Miss Bennet, the governess, a black eye, and then arterward a-kicking my own lady's legs as if they was foot-balls. Well, sir, my lady catches hold of the young rebel, drags him into the hall, and, catching hold of a horsewhip, begins a-tanning of him right well, and as the young beggar deserved; but just at this moment in come my lord, and immediately he see what is a-going on, he rushes forward to rescue the little 'un; but my lady was too sharp for him, and, snatching up the Honorable Mr. Arthur in her arms, a-kicking and a-squalling like mad, she ran with him into the dining-room, and shut the door in my lord's face. And, sir, forthwith my lord burst out crying and howling like a babe, a-begging and praying of my lady to spare Mr. Arthur, while the other side of the door was Mr. Arthur, a-screeching and yelling from the whacks which my lady was giving of him no end. What a commotion it did create throughout the house!"

Everitt felt a slight twinge of conscience as he listened to this story, and it was with uneasiness that he, by means of a servant's garrulity, possessed himself of the secrets of the family he was about to be introduced to; but the revelations were so startling, and were so graphically made, that he was forced to stifle the voice of honor, and to permit the man to talk on.

"Now, sir," continued the man, who evidently had a lively admiration for his mistress, "my lady would not do this kind of work if she could help it. But if she had told one of us to give Mr. Arthur a flogging, my lord would have been safe to discharge any one who had obeyed her. So what is my lady to do?"

"Exactly," observed Everitt, dryly, and as he uttered the word he prepared to leave the room.

As he descended the stairs, Lord Crayford came rolling up, like a jolly schoolboy to meet him, and conduct him to the presence of Lady Crayford, whom they found in a drawing-room with her eldest daughter, a pretty child of about fourteen years of age, and little Arthur, whose conduct on the previous day had already been communicated to Everitt.

As we have ere this made her ladyship's acquaintance, it is needless to give another particular description of her proud, magnificent style. Everitt, who had never seen her before, was at the first glance impressed with her superiority to her husband.

"My little girl Emily," observed Lady Crayford, coldly, seeing that the stranger's eyes were fixed on her daughter.

Everitt bowed.

"And in a minute," continued Lady Crayford, "Emily's governess, Miss Bennet, will make her appearance, when you will have an opportunity of staring at her."

"Many thanks for your kind permission," returned Everitt, somewhat staggered by the reception her ladyship gave him; but she was so handsome, and there was such a mixture of reckless defiance in her rudeness, that Everitt was startled and amused rather than mortified.

"Mr. Reeves has been with me this morning, my dear," observed Lord Crayford, who apprehended a storm, and good-naturedly wished to save Everitt from it.

"Oh! any other of your 'sieves' honored you with a visit, my lord? If they did, I trust you supplied them liberally with beer and tobacco."

Lord Crayford held his tongue, and gave Everitt a glance of anxious commiseration, that was so inexpressibly ludicrous that Everitt was on the verge of breaking into laughter.

"Perhaps you wonder, Mr. Brookbank, what I mean by Lord Crayford's 'sieves.' It is a name I have given to all the evangelical clergymen about here, and all the dissenting ministers and other tub-thumpers, who constitute the crowd of my lord's admirers. They come here, and Lord Crayford talks freely to them about missionaries, and negroes, and all such things, garnishing his conversation with the oaths and brutal expressions which he delights in as much as in texts of Scripture; but the devout ministers, when they return to their congregations, out of respect they bear to a pious lord, only report the religion and none of the blasphemy. So, you see, his words run through them as if they were sieves, all the impure ones being kept back, and all that is meritorious reaching the crowd."

While this explanation was being delivered, Lord Crayford strove to command himself, and in groans, and sighs, and fifty different noises, and as many strange movements of his limbs, endeavored to find vent for his irritability; but the effort was ineffectual, for as Lady Crayford uttered the last word he burst out with a vehement expression of his anger.

"By ——! I'll be —— if I stand this."

"For shame, my lord; you, a religious man, swearing!"

At this moment the door opened, and Miss Bennet entered; upon which Emily rose from the seat where in silence she had been watching her parents, and advanced to her governess with welcoming hands.

"Ah, my dear! then you are here again from your walk? Did you find it very cold?" observed Lady Crayford, with a voice that suddenly became kind and womanly; and she went on to perform the ceremony of introducing Everitt to the young lady.

Dinner was now announced.

"No; do you offer your arm to Miss Bennet. You shall be polite to me at some other time," said Lady Crayford, drawing back from Everitt, and extending her hand to her husband, with the same air of disdain and pity with which she would have presented a coin to a beggar. Emily, as a maiden of tender years, to whom a late dinner would be injurious, did not accompany the party to the dining-room.

"The handsomest dining-room in the county, Brookbank," observed Lord Crayford, as they entered that apartment; "measure it as you like, and consider it in what way you will, it is the finest and most imposing room in any house this side of the county: it is six feet longer and one higher than Sir Arber Reynolds's. For the pictures I can not say much; but you ought to know I sold the best when I was hard up and wanted ready money."

"A revelation that must be very interesting to Mr. Brookbank," said Lady Crayford, sarcastically, biting her lip.

"Lord bless you!" exclaimed Lord Crayford, in a tone that paid back the contempt, "that's like your pride and arrogance. But I should like to know what is the disgrace of poverty. Were not the apostles poor enough? Weren't the early Christians often put to it for a meal? Let me tell you this, Lady Crayford: when you are laid low under the church-yard sod, all this kind of thing will be taken out of you, or I am very much mistaken. And as to what I was saying of my own difficulties for money, I repeat, I never do any thing I'm ashamed of, and, consequently, I'm ashamed of nothing I do. 'A pure conscience and an easy shoe' is my motto."

"This is a very nice fish," put in Miss Bennet, good-naturedly wishing to produce a diversion.

"Have you much hunting in the neighborhood?" asked Everitt, with the same laudable intention.

"So, you see, Brookbank," resumed Lord Crayford, his good-nature perfectly restored, "I sold the pictures, and pos-

itively got fourteen thousand pounds for the beastly daubs. My poor grandfather, who was a very worldly man (I trust he is pardoned), and had a taste for vanities, bought them at double the price. I have often had to sell gauds and bawbles; for you see I am charitably disposed, always ready to aid the suffering, and my purse, bountiful as Providence has been to me, is not a long one. In fact, somehow or other, my whole life has been passed in pecuniary difficulties. Just look at those chintz curtains: they were put up to replace a magnificent, gorgeous set that I sold for—let's see—I think it was one hundred and eighty pounds—was it not one hundred and eighty pounds, Lady Crayford?"

"Why don't you tell Mr. Brookbank at once," said her ladyship, with furious calmness, "that there are bailiffs in the house at this very moment?"

"I was about to state the fact, my dear; and I trust Brookbank will have the pleasure of seeing them to-night in my turning-room before going to bed," replied Lord Crayford, coolly.

Everitt found it impossible to be what we are told the complete gentleman always is—at his ease, during the continuance of these connubial hostilities, which lasted till the two ladies rose from the table and retired to the drawing-room. In vain he started fresh topics of conversation. If he put leading questions on fashionable news to the hostess, her ladyship's replies were curt, cold, and even insolent; if he made inquiries of Lord Crayford with regard to the state of politics and sporting in the county, before that easy-tempered nobleman could respond, his amiable wife threw forth an observation that effectually stopped the discussion; and when he asked Miss Bennet her opinion on any subject, that young lady, though perfectly willing to assist his distress, was unable, from nervousness, to effectually help him.

As Lady Crayford rose to retire, however, she deigned to bestow a civil speech and a smile on her guest.

"Since you appreciate music, as I should say you do from what you have been saying to Miss Bennet, you will, I trust, not be disappointed with what we can offer you when you join us in the drawing-room."

To this gracious invitation Everitt gave a suitable reply, and, having attended the ladies to the door, returned to his seat.

"Now, my dear fellow, let us enjoy ourselves," exclaimed Lord Crayford, joyfully, as the door closed upon his wife. "Jackson, another bottle of the yellow seal, and a couple of my favorite glasses. By Jove! how well you bore it, Brookbank. I could almost have cried for you—indeed I could, my dear fellow! You see, we all have a cross to bear, some in sickness, some in evil temper, some in poverty, some in wounds of pride and vanity; but I in Lady Crayford—she's my cross; and cross enough, too, she is, I dare say you think. Ha! ha! not so bad. But, lord! in all our trials there is a Comforter to cheer us; what a sweet reflection that is! Bravo, Jackson! give me the jug. Now, Brookbank, help yourself, and tell me what you think of it. And here, Jackson, do you take a glass too, now it is cool and fresh, and before the bouquet has gone off."

Jackson obeyed and quitted the room.

"I dare say you judge me to be a queer one, and are meditating how unlike I am to any thing you ever met before," observed Lord Crayford, drawing his chair up close to Everitt's, and filling his glass as he spoke. "I can read your thoughts, you see. But what do you think I care for them? Don't *you* think I love you or any one else the less for fancying me an oddity. It's my pride to be singular; for—don't you perceive how it is that I come to be singular? Why, it's just this: I'm remarkable because I am a good Christian; and that, let me tell you, is a very remarkable production as this world goes, I can assure you. I needn't tell you who they were who were called mad and drunk full eighteen

hundred years back, simply because they loved God and hated the devil. Now what am I known as? Go and ask any body who comes in your way, from north to south, and you'll be answered, '*The good* Lord Crayford.' Call out on the house-tops, and inquire if the salt of the earth contains a peer of the realm, and from all quarters you'll be answered, 'Yes, one, and that one is *the good* Lord Crayford.' But fill your glass, and remember I allow no heel-taps."

Everitt emptied his glass, and poured out another bumper, and passed the bottle over to his host, who manifestly relished his wine.

"Why, if I were to tell you all I've done in the cause of religion, you'd marvel that I am not worn to a skeleton. There is not an association in the kingdom, for Gospel purposes, that I am not a member of; there's not a county in England or Wales that I have not traveled through, preaching in the highways and by-ways to the populace; there is not a charitable institution in the kingdom that I don't give my mite to; two thirds of the clergy of this diocese look up to me with more respect than they do to their bishop; no less than two hundred and forty-seven times have I made a speech, more than an hour long, in Exeter Hall, for all kinds of societies; the number of sermons that I have composed out of my own head is positively enormous; every Sunday evening I perform service in my own house to my servants and tenantry; and I never lose an opportunity of getting up in the House of Lords and having a fling at the Roman Catholics. Now all this may be very singular; but let me assure you that John Crayford, of Wolton Hall—a man of no more importance in the eyes of God than John Crayford's game-keeper—has no objection to be the victim of such singularity. Once more, my dear boy, fill your glass, and don't be a bottle-stopper. Talking makes me dry."

"Do you meet with any opposition from any of the wealthier people of the district?" Everitt inquired, filling his glass.

"Opposition!" I believe you. But, Heaven bless you! what is opposition when you're in earnest? When I first began having divine service in my music-room, the rector of this parish—positively my own rector—set himself up against me, expostulated with me, jawed me, and kicked up such a hullaballoo as I shall never forget. But it was all no go: I was firm. Well, what does he do? he opens shop too, and has a service every Sunday evening in the church, in opposition to mine; and certainly, for a few weeks, he almost licked me, for he has a lot of charities to dispense to the poor, and they were more afraid of offending him than me. Now, said I to myself, something must be done, and forthwith I laid my plans, the consequence of which was, that every poor person, on leaving my congregation the next Sunday, had a good tract and a shilling slipped into his hand. I kept this up for several Sundays, and the parson's church was so thinned, and he got so laughed at, that he was forced to give in, and own himself conquered. But, after all, he is a good fellow in his way, but his understanding is weak, and he is the victim of prejudice."

The reminiscence of this conflict so delighted the good Lord Crayford that the peals of laughter that rolled from his mouth were loud and louder, till Everitt, tickled by the scene and the absurdity of the story he had just heard, and carried away by the overpowering mirth of his companion, allowed his sense of the ridiculous to give way, and joined in the noisy applause.

For more than an hour Lord Crayford continued to talk to Everitt in this boisterous and blustering good-natured manner; and then, the bottle having been finished, and Everitt declining to take more wine, the sitting came to an end.

"Lady Crayford promised she would give me some music when we rejoined her," said Everitt, rising from the table.

"If you like music, I advise you to hook it," answered

his lordship, putting his tongue out of his mouth, and shaking his head like a dull schoolboy wishing to be smart. "Her music is neither here nor there; her execution on the piano is just tol-lol, but on the harp it is abominable, and her singing is positively disgusting. I don't mince matters. I say positively disgusting, and nothing short of it."

"I am not a fastidious critic."

"You needn't be, I can tell you. But I'll tell you what, Brookbank, if you don't wish to be sold, let us cut the ladies and enjoy ourselves. For myself, I can't manage to be with you if you prefer Lady Crayford's society to mine, for this is rehearsal night with my band, a very important occasion, for next week is our annual musical festival."

"Thank you; but I will be true to the chivalry of my nature and to my engagement, for I told Lady Crayford I should like to hear her sing."

"Well, my dear boy, do as you will. Only, if you have a slow evening, don't put it down to my fault."

They separated; and in another minute Everitt had entered the drawing-room in which Lady Crayford usually passed her evenings, and found himself in the presence of that lady and Miss Bennet.

"I was just debating the chances in favor of your returning to us."

"Did you deem me so unselfish as to be likely to obey the less pleasant of two commands?"

"Lord Crayford usually bears off strangers to his smoking-room straight from the dessert-table."

"He solicited me to accompany him, and hear his band play, but I resisted in the hope of hearing better music."

"Pray let us have a few more of those pretty sayings; they are better than music," answered her ladyship, most graciously. "Ah! here is the coffee, and my pet comes in also. Emily, my child, you are too late to hear Mr. Brookbank, who has been singing to us."

"Perhaps he will sing *again*."

"It would be impossible for me to do that," answered Everitt.

"Not when it is to please *me*," Emily rejoined, archly.

"That entreaty must inspire you. A girl's prayer is more potent than a tyrant's command," exclaimed Lady Crayford, with a merry laugh.

"But even the command of such a tyrant as a beautiful woman can not nerve a withered frame, or give a faculty to her slave which Nature has denied him," Everitt responded.

"Treason! treason!"

"Not to the royalty and omnipotence of feminine influence."

"To the philosophy of the mind, and there's a fine sounding piece of nonsense for you. The slave would find himself endowed with the gift if he felt his mistress relied on his obedience. We become strong as strength is expected in us."

"Have you found it so in life?"

"Perhaps I have not had an opportunity of trying the truth of my position."

"That can hardly be; for slaves are plenty, and—"

"And I have an imperious disposition, you would say, only you have not sufficient courage. Now pay attention to me, for I am about to give you an order. Come to the piano and sing; I will accompany you."

"Have some coffee first."

"Now you are pledged. Lady Crayford, I am witness to the promise," put in Miss Bennet.

"We'll have the coffee first," replied Lady Crayford, with a smile. "Mr. Brookbank, be my page."

So completely changed did Lady Crayford in a few minutes become to Everitt, that her manner and words fully justified the favorable opinion he had formed of her at the first glance. On books and pictures, the latest bon-mots and

anecdotes of London, they conversed in a style that manifested the gratification they both found in the way in which the subjects were handled. In her ladyship's address were a frankness and simple humor that are rarely found in any but *young* girls of superior natures; and every sentence she uttered was brilliant with that unconstrained wit which none can command unless they move much in the best society. From the coffee and scandal they turned to the music; and after Everitt had been regaled with the unusually artistic powers of his entertainer and Miss Bennet, he redeemed his pledge to obey, and sung with Lady Crayford a short duet. More than once, as the evening progressed, Everitt was startled by the vision of the absent lord rising before him, and as often he wondered how that worthy nobleman was conducting himself.

Emily kissed her mamma and went to bed; and after another half hour Miss Bennet left the room, not to return; but still Everitt and Lady Crayford kept up their conversation.

"There, we have said enough about the great world, and indulged quite as much as we ought in sentiment, although Lord Crayford is too good to fight duels; so now let us come nearer home, and talk about little things."

"Suppose we make revelations about ourselves?" rejoined Everitt.

"With all my heart; only, in that case, I am afraid we should soon fall into sentiment. I think you say you are quite a stranger in this county."

"I am quite so, save that I have a slight acquaintance with one lady who lives not far from this spot—Mrs. Ambrose Hill."

"Ah! Lidacre Priory—'tis a sweet place."

"Do you know Mrs. Ambrose Hill?"

"Scarcely. You see, the Priory is nearly eighteen miles from this, and for some years we have entered into very lit-

tle society. Once a year I escape from this seclusion—or rather prison-house—and rub off the rust of the country in the full of the London season; but here my solitude is so unbroken that often for a month together I am not disturbed by a caller."

"Brandon I like the aspect of very much."

"It is a very picturesque city; but don't fall into raptures about the Cathedral, for we must steer clear of sentiment. I very rarely manage to visit the monastic old place, although I have an uncle living there a portion of every year—Canon Dillingborough."

"What! is Mr. Dillingborough your uncle?"

"Surely he is. Your question of surprise shows you are not so well read in the peerage as every well-bred young man ought to be; but never mind that now. Do you know Mr. Dillingborough?"

"No. I have not that pleasure."

"Then is there any thing wonderful in my having an uncle?"

"It is an extraordinary circumstance, and worthy an exclamation of astonishment," Everitt responded with a laugh, "especially when a very dear friend of mine is Mrs. Dillingborough's cousin, and spends a great deal of time in her house."

"Then friendship is a sentiment you are not ashamed to cultivate. And who may this very dear friend be?"

"I will keep him wrapped in mystery, so that you may respect him. In time you'll conceive him a demigod."

"Is his name Hugh Falcon?"

The color sprung to Everitt's face; but, before he could utter a word, a servant entered with a note for him. It was an open slip of paper, and was inscribed with a pencil.

"Here, I will read it for you," said Lady Crayford, quietly taking, as she spoke, the note from the salver in the man's hand.

Everitt, of course, let her have her way.

"It is laconic, and full of purpose—two of the requisites of a good epigram," she observed, sarcastically. "'Dear Brookbank,—If you fancy a bit of deviled steak and a pull at a tankard of cool porter, now's your time. Also a blow of tobacco. Yours, J. C.'"

"Lord Crayford is very kind."

The lady bit her under lip as she tossed the note on the fire; and then, turning to Everitt, she drew herself up to her full height proudly and defiantly, and then scanned his countenance with eager curiosity.

"You had better go," she said, composedly, when the silence had lasted for almost a minute. "I hope the smoke will not be positively disagreeable to you; and, if you intend to call at Lidacre Priory in that coat, I advise you not to enter 'the turning-room' till you have put on another. I mean what I say; so, now—good-night!"

It was evident that she was pained, and that she wished to be obeyed; so Everitt took his leave of her, and, following the lead of a servant, proceeded to Lord Crayford's turning-room.

On arriving in that apartment, he found it of large dimensions, well furnished with turning lathes, and all the tools cabinet-makers and whitesmiths use. These industrial implements were ranged along the walls; but in all other respects the room was furnished as if it were used by its owner as an ordinary dwelling-parlor; for it was well carpeted, a blazing fire roared up the chimney from a handsome stove, and sofas and easy-chairs were present in abundance. In the centre was a table, on which was spread a substantial supper, in the demolition of which a party of gentlemen, consisting of Lord Crayford and five others, were busily engaged.

"Brookbank, my boy, here is a place for you!" exclaimed his lordship from the head of the table. "We began

without you, because we did not know whether you would come. Jackson and Stephen you already know; yonder, at the bottom of the table, is Dick Johnson, my head game-keeper. Dick Johnson—Mr. Brookbank; Mr. Brookbank—Dick Johnson: be known to each other. The two gentlemen here on my right are members of the legal profession, whom I am proud to have the honor of entertaining for a short time—Mr. Mathers and Mr. Crarl; Mr. Mathers and Mr. Crarl—Mr. Brookbank; Mr. Brookbank—Mr. Mathers and Mr. Crarl: I trust you'll become intimately acquainted with each other."

Mr. Mathers and Mr. Crarl evinced much confusion and astonishment at this introduction, and made violent pulls, each at his respective head of hair, as if immediate baldness was the one object of their common ambition; for, though they were men of the world, having witnessed many varieties of life, and ever making it their rule to be at home, and serene under the most unfavorable circumstances, they were so startled by the "liberty, fraternity, and equality" principles of Wolton Hall, that their habitual self-possession was every five minutes being set to the right-about. Dick Johnson, however, who had spent twenty years in Lord Crayford's service, saw nothing remarkable in the ceremonial; and in response to Everitt's somewhat stately bow, gave a familiar nod, accompanied with a brief assurance that he was happy to make the gentleman's acquaintance, and he hoped he seed him blooming.

"Here is some deviled steak—there you have a cold game pie. Which will you have, Brookbank?"

Everitt decided in favor of the cold game pie, and asked for a tankard of ale, which was speedily brought to him by a servant, who forthwith seated himself by the side of our friend, and helped himself to one of the dishes.

"In this carpenter's shop of mine," said Lord Crayford, turning to Everitt, "I spend a great deal of time, and, one

year with another, get through a great deal of work. Not a carpenter of any kind ever finds his way into this house; every thing that is broken I mend, and every thing that is new I make. That inlaid table you admired so in Lady Crayford's drawing-room, John Crayford was the constructor of. And there is not a tenant on my estate whose house does not contain some handsome piece of furniture of my building."

Mr. Mathers here observed that no longer than a fortnight back, he had under his custody, in an establishment over which he presided in a professional character, a carved oak bedstead that was called into existence by his lordship's industry and ingenuity.

"There are those," continued his lordship, with simplicity and exultation, "who profess to despise my humble tastes, and who call me, in contempt, a wheelwright. Pugh! the ignominious simpletons! I think I could point out to them a wheelwright who was fit company even for a lord of this world. And I don't want to boast of the intellects which the Almighty has bestowed on me, doubtless for some wise purpose, but still, I may honestly, and with all humility, say—"

"Ay, that you may," put in Dick Johnson and the other servants, with charming affability.

"—That no man now living in England has made more useful and elegant inventions than I have. Take my coffee-pot alone—'John Crayford's Self-Acting Coffee Biggin.' Where will you get a more complete thing of its kind? It is not every man who drinks his coffee out of his own patent coffee biggin."

"Oh, you took out a patent for it?"

"Yes, certainly I did. I was not going to have every rogue in the kingdom copying my invention, and robbing me of the merit of it?"

"Are there many of the kind sold?" Everitt inquired, with *gravity*.

"Damn it, sir!" roared the good Lord Crayford, starting to his feet at the question, "what the devil do you mean by that? Do you think I make things to get money by them? Do you suppose I am a tinker? a cursed navvy, ready to let myself out on hire to every one willing to employ me? Because I have a mind, is that a reason that every blackguard in the kingdom has a right to make use of it? My patent was taken out to prevent any body making his beastly coffee in a pot like mine, not that I might get money."

Everitt made an apology, which scarcely succeeded in mollifying the irate Lord Crayford; when Mr. Crarl observed that, for his part, coffee, viewed in the light of a beverage, was simply horse-beans; but give him, at his early breakfast, a quart of gin-sling or shandy-gaff in an earthenware tea-pot, and allow him to help himself, and he would then admit that slops meant business. Mr. Crarl poured forth these sentiments in lengthy and involved sentences, the incoherency and confusion of his oratory making it manifest to his audience that the stimulating draughts he had indulged in, and the cigars he had smoked all day long, to the exhaustion of Lord Crayford's new stock of regalias, had deprived him of a large portion of his nervous and intellectual vigor.

At the end of an hour, which was enlivened by the oratorical efforts of the gentlemen present, Everitt saw Mr. Crarl slip down from his seat to the floor, where, in a recumbent position, he supported himself with a bottle of brandy; and at the same time Lord Crayford gave unmistakable signs of somnolency, which he endeavored to overcome by rousing himself, and letting off little speeches on mechanics and evangelical principles, each of which harangues was followed by the loud applause of the auditors.

"Here we are my friends," observed the noble entertainer, rising to his legs, and speaking in tones of thrilling pathos, "all equals, all made out of the dust, and all destined to return to it, or worms, which are more disagreeable. What a

wonderful thing is man, and how infinitely absurd are his ways!" (Cheers—during which his lordship took a bumper of wine.) "But what I say is this—it may be wrong in the eyes of this world, but this world is no better than a mole as regards spiritual matters—we are all brothers of one family, and as much as in me lies, I'll never permit haughtiness and sinful pride to oppress any, even the humblest of my household." (More cheers and beating of tables.) "One of my sentiments is, 'All gentlemen are equal, and every Christian is a gentleman.' And, now I think of it, Brookbank, allow me to—oh! let's see, what is it? Ah! to be sure, allow me to humbly and contritely ask your pardon for the violent language I used to you just—"

"My dear sir!"

"Don't interrupt me, Brookbank; you know I am guilty, for I swore at you and cursed you. Pardon me, my dear, noble-hearted young friend—pardon me."

At this point Lord Crayford burst into tears, and labored so visibly under deep emotion that Everitt would gladly have put him at his ease.

"What's a coffee biggin," continued the penitent, "that we should stir up all this strife, and boil all these contentions in it? And if a higher than mortal power has bestowed on me intellects superior to such as have been granted to the mass of mankind, why should I exult? why should I deem it an insult to have it supposed I work for money in copper and other metals, when a coppersmith was the friend of an inspired teacher, and it is my belief that we are all equal? Brookbank, your hand."

Everitt immediately extended the hand of reconciliation; but, before Lord Crayford could grasp it, the unconsciousness of slumber descended upon him, and the worthy nobleman fell back into his easy-chair, snoring loudly.

"He's gone off," exclaimed Jackson and the game-keeper together.

"Mr. Jackson, have the horn out—do, just so as this gentleman may see," cried the other servants, who had now assembled in the turning-room to a considerable number.

"You see, sir, my lord always goes off suddenly like this," Jackson, the butler, explained to Everitt. "And now, sir, if you'll wait for ten seconds, I'll show you what I call a good spree."

Having retired to an adjoining room for a few seconds, Jackson returned with a bugle in his right hand, and in his left a short wand, such as musical conductors signal to their bands with. Going up close to his master, the man played off a flourish or two from the bugle into his left ear. The sound did not awaken the sleeper, but only set him off talking in his slumber about music, and the arrangement of his own orchestra, which was composed of his servants and tenantry.

When he had rambled on for a few minutes to a roomful of attentive listeners, his speech became more coherent, and he evidently imagined that he was conducting his band on the occasion of a grand musical festival.

"Now is your time, Mr. Jackson—he's ready for the next move," whispered the servants.

Playing off a few more notes on the instrument, the butler slipped the conducting wand into his master's hand, and then continued to perform a soft and gentle air on the bugle. In an instant Lord Crayford rose and leaned forward, holding the wand lightly in his hand; a brief pause, and then elevating his baton and letting it fall, beating time with it in the air, waving it to and fro, turning himself to the right and left, and then bending forward with extended hands, he went through all those evolutions and gesticulations which make a band-conductor in the exercise of his vocation such an absurd posture-master.

"Now make him furious, Mr. Jackson," whispered some

of the company, when the sleeper had complacently conducted his imaginary band for several minutes.

Jackson paused for a moment, and then, with a malicious grin, nodding his readiness to comply with their request, recommenced playing, only now no longer performing well, but taking care to make a false note every fifty seconds.

"Confound you! what do you mean by that, you villain, Dick Johnson? Mind what you are after. Do you mean to say you won't obey your conductor when he gives you an order?" exclaimed Lord Crayford, stamping his foot on the floor, and striking with his baton right and left, and, as the false notes became more numerous and of a more painful character, waxing more and more violent. "Tom Brown, you villain! I swear I'll break your infernal head if you go on in that way. Oh! oh! Heaven have mercy on me! Scott, you rascal! I'll smash every bone you've got in your body, and then kick you out of your farm. Oh! oh! do that again, and, by ——, I'll fling my baton at your wooden head. There, you rascal! you will have it, so take that for your pains."

As his lordship concluded, Jackson blew a frightful blast of screeching discord in his victim's ear, who forthwith gave a cry of agony, and sent his baton flying across the room at the supposed offender's head. Every one was on the alert, and got out of the reach of the missile, which broke the glass globes of the two lamps which stood in the centre of the table. Jackson continued to play, and the baton, being picked up, was once more slipped into Lord Crayford's hand, when the same scene, with very slight variations, was repeated without delay.

No less than seven times in all was the baton restored to the musician, and no less than eight times was it flung from his hand with all the force he could command. The consequence was, that, after the eighth emission of the ensign of authority, there was not an entire plate, glass, or dish of any

kind on the supper-table, and the lights were put out, so that the crowded room was in total darkness.

"Now for a fine hurly!" Everitt heard the butler say, and forthwith that dutiful servant produced from his horn a row horrible enough to torture a stone wall.

"Oh, murder! murder! where am I? It is a dream! I know it is a dream! What shall I do? Oh, my head! Help! help! Fire! water! police! My name is John Crayford! Have mercy on me! I am the good Lord Crayford—the salt of the earth! I'll kill you—I swear I will! Oh! oh!"

A noise followed these exclamations which informed Everitt that Lord Crayford had fallen to the ground in his agony.

"He'll wake up in a minute or two now," said a voice in Everitt's ear; "so, if I was you, sir, I'd slip off, for my lord don't object to us having a joke with him, but perhaps it would hurt him to know that he had been done so brown with you a looking on."

CHAPTER XXIV.

LIDACRE PRIORY.

THE next morning Everitt awoke with those unpleasant twinges of conscience that are wont to trouble our waking moments when we have closed the previous day in an unfit manner. It was true, he had only remained a passive spectator when his well-meaning host had been made the butt for drunken servants to aim their coarse jests at, and it was true that he was far more pained than amused by the indecent scene; still, in his heart, he felt guilty of dishonor in not defending the unconscious Lord Crayford from the insults of his menials, and he was compelled to acknowledge that remaining the tacit witness of such a spectacle as closed the

orgy of the turning-room made him really an encourager of it. In the penitential fit that followed upon this reflection, he looked round to see if he could make amends for his past misconduct, but no way of doing so occurred to him. To inform Lord Crayford of all that had taken place would be absurd, for Jackson's last words made it clear that his lordship permitted his servants to take any liberties with him; to speak to Lady Crayford on the subject would be only to tell her, in a new form, that which caused her grief enough already; and to reprimand or expostulate with the butler and game-keeper and their subordinates was out of the question.

When he had completed his toilet, he descended to the hall, where a servant, meeting him, informed him that breakfast was ready in the great dining-room, the magnificent proportions of which Lord Crayford had the day before expatiated on. Entering the apartment, Everitt found the family assembled, and on the point of kneeling down to prayers. The master of the house, fresh and blooming (as though he had retired to rest at nine o'clock of the previous evening and risen with the first dawn), had already explained a passage of the Bible to the servants, and, now that Everitt had taken a place near Lady Crayford and the children, proceeded to read a prayer from a book for domestic devotion.

"If you are late again for prayers, Brookbank," said his lordship, bluntly, when the religious exercises were concluded, "you'll have to pay your forfeit. Every member of my household, from high to low, who fails in punctuality at family worship, is fined for the missionary box; my children are mulcted to the amount of a shilling, the upper servants sixpence, and the lower ones threepence."

"Is Lady Crayford allowed an immunity from punishment for misconduct?" Everitt inquired.

"It is no matter what she is *allowed*, for she takes whatever she likes," answered his lordship, with a sigh, and an upraising of his eyelids. After a pause, he added, with se-

verity, "Her proper fine is half a crown; but as she never pays, the arrears amount to over thirty pounds. Lady Crayford may call such conduct honesty—I don't!"

"My dear lord, don't misrepresent me to Mr. Brookbank. You know I always paid my forfeits very honorably, and as your obedient subject ought to do, till I discovered that the contents of your missionary box went to discharge your tobacconist's bills."

"It's false! your slanderous accusation is without an atom of truth for its foundation," cried Lord Crayford, furiously. "I refunded every penny of the sum I borrowed of the M. B."

"Do I speak untruly when I say that, about three years ago, when your tobacconist pressed you for payment of a large account, you gave the entire contents of the missionary box, amounting to something more than thirty-five pounds, to the man, on account?"

"I repaid every penny to the box."

"But how am I to know that you did not empty the till again for the benefit of one of your unfortunate creditors?"

"Go on, madam; go on: I beg you to continue. The good must make up their minds to be misrepresented; and I am thankful to say that I can bear contumely. Jackson, no longer back than yesterday, gave me a lesson how to bear insults and unjust reproaches."

Wishing to turn the torrent from Lady Crayford, Everitt promptly offered himself to the attacker by saying he was sorry that, through ignorance of the regulations of the establishment, he had not presented himself so early as he ought to have done, and that he could only account for his coming down so late by the fact that he was very much exhausted when he left the turning-room.

"Oh, my dear boy! my dear boy!" exclaimed Lord Crayford, jumping forward to him with a gentlemanly anxiety to soothe his feelings, "do not allude to the circumstances of last night; you need make no apology, for you really were

not accountable for what took place. I know exactly how it happened. You were fatigued with a long day's exertion when you entered the room, and, feeling thirsty, you drank heartily. Well, well, what of that? Surely our natural appetites are to be gratified. And if you were eventually—a—a—just a little—nothing more—why, it was your misfortune more than your fault. Indeed, I can not consider myself altogether free from offense in the matter; to say the least of it, it was imprudent in me to leave so early as I did, without even giving you a caution; but you were enjoying yourself so much, to all appearance, that I did not like to disturb you. So say no more about it; only, mind, if you are so careless again, you shall, for a punishment, sing 'The Cobbler's Wife' to Lady Crayford, only we'll excuse you the burnt cork. Oh dear me! it was capital! ha! ha! ha!"

"Really, I do not understand you," said Everitt, so astounded with this extraordinary address that he could not decide how he ought to reply to it.

"Ah! very likely not! very likely not! I dare say you do not exactly remember all that occurred. How should you?"

Emily opened her eyes with astonishment. Everitt bit his lip with annoyance. And Master Arthur put down his bread and butter, and burst into a roar of laughter.

"Arthur, I desire you not to make such a noise," said Lady Crayford, angrily; but, as she reproved the boisterous boy, there was a smile of malicious amusement on her short upper lip that was not lost to Everitt.

Breakfast over, Lord Crayford vanished to perform some magisterial duties, and the children went off with Miss Bennet to the school-room, so that Everitt and his hostess were again together without any third person.

"I am at a loss," said Everitt, "how to interpret Lord Crayford's words relative to my conduct last night."

"He spoke very plainly," answered Lady Crayford,

"Surely you do not credit the charges brought against me? I can not believe you would wrong me so."

"Would you wish me to place no reliance on my husband's words? He may be a very foolish, weak man, but you have no reason to question his honesty."

Everitt bit his lip once more.

"Come, come," laughed Lady Crayford; "you may not be angry with your treatment here, for you invited yourself. If you stay with me a fortnight, I will, at the end of that time, tell you whether I think you capable of being the boon companion of my servants."

"You may be just, but you certainly are not merciful."

"Never mind my defects; and for the present, think how you can best amuse yourself in this dull county. Unless you have the tastes of a carpenter's apprentice, you can not look to Lord Crayford to supply you with any means of diversion beyond the absurdities of his character and conduct; and for myself—I am too old, and have had too many flirtations, to care to have you slipping about after me all day long. Then, Miss Bennet is plain, and Emily is a mere child; so you must really go out of doors for amusement."

"Have you no books?"

"Very few. Lord Crayford sold the furniture of the library as he did the dining-room curtains. What a terrible thing it is to be good! And you did not come into the country to read and do exactly what you can in town."

"You must direct me."

"Well, for this day, poke about the house by yourself; saunter about the garden, and talk to the servants about the game; go into the stables, and find that we have no horse for you to ride; I can't give you better advice for this morning."

"Your carriage is at the door, my lady," said Jackson, entering the room.

"Tell Ellis, then, I shall want her immediately up stairs."

With a "Yes, my lady," Jackson disappeared.

"I have a long drive before me this morning," observed her ladyship, rising and bending slightly to Everitt. "I am going to see my dear old uncle, my mother's brother, at Forest Noble. Whenever my unfortunate husband gets into especial pecuniary difficulties, I go to Sir Archer Wray, benevolent good old man! for advice and help. You'll see me back at dinner; and, if I have fared well, those 'gentlemen of the legal profession' Lord Crayford talks so much about, with whom you supped last night, will take an immediate departure. So good-by for the present."

Upon the whole, Everitt did not enjoy himself much that day, though he had the grounds to explore, and an acquaintance to make with the park.

When the sound of Lady Crayford's departing carriage had died away, he put on his hat and sallied forth from the house, and went the circuit of the gardens, which he found not very well managed. The statues on the terraces were in several instances mutilated, and the exterior of the house at many points was in sad want of repair. Behind the mansion there were handsome stables, which in the distance had an imposing effect; but on approaching them, Everitt detected many signs of their dilapidated condition; the tiles were slipping from the roofing, and the face of the great clock, over the coach-house door, wanted a minute-hand. An old man who was wandering about the court asked him, with a humorous leer, if he would like to have the key of the stables, in order to inspect "his lordship's racers."

Everitt quietly responded "Yes" to this inquiry, and forthwith the old man, who was short in stature and breathing, and feeble, and bow-legged, hobbled off, and in a few minutes returned with the key, and a sardonic grin on his countenance.

"It's a pretty sight, ain't it? A precious sweet sight, ain't it? A remarkable creditable turn-out, ain't it? Cuss and bless my eyes! a remarkable creditable turn-out!" re-

marked this aged retainer of the hall to Everitt, as they passed in review the empty stalls.

"You recollect when it was otherwise?"

"Otherwise! Lord bless your honor! otherwise? I should think I do, indeed. In the old lord's time, things wern't in this disreputable state. Why, sir, I began life as Lord Crayford's jockey, and when I grew too heavy his lordship made me one of his whips, and then I came to be his lordship's huntsman; and you may trust me, business in those times was just done in style! But now, whew! and it ain't enough that the present lord fools away his money on a parcel of cant and nonsense, a preaching away like a common Dissenter, and a grimacing like a baboon at the head of a brass band, but he must every Sunday be giving sermons against the sins of lying and Sabbath-breaking, and gambling, and hunting! putting gambling and hunting together! And then, afore, and in the face of all the congregation, he pints his finger at me, and tells me to repent of all my cruelty to dumb animals, and weeps and howls over me. 'Lor, my lord,' I bawled out once, right furious, slap in the middle of his jaw, 'don't go on like that to me, for it won't suit; it may fit some, but it carn't do me no good.' 'What!' cries my lord, 'don't you call yourself a Christian?' 'No,' says I, as bold as brass, 'I ain't a Christian—I'm a jockey.' Every one was dumbstruck at my daring; but, turning about to my lady, who every now and then comes to his lordship's preachings, just to keep him in good-humor, I seed her trying to be calm and serious, but a giggling all inside herself, fit to bust."

"What did Lord Crayford say?"

"Oh! he took it all right, for he hopes, he says, to convert me one day, sooner or later; and, even under the wussest of aggarewations, he don't bear spite."

"But did Lord Crayford never keep up a stud?"

"He never hunted or went on the turf, your honor; but

the first years arter his marriage with my lady, he lived as grand as any of them."

From the stables Everitt went to the green-houses, and from the green-houses his curiosity led him up to the turning-room, where he found Lord Crayford busily constructing a sofa of a novel pattern, working under the critical eyes of Messrs. Mather and Crarl, a carpenter's flannel jacket encasing the superior part of his body, and his bluff, good-natured face being surmounted by a cap of brown paper.

"At it, you see, Brookbank!" exclaimed the workman, as Everitt entered. "And at it I am from morning till night! Catch him when you will, you'll never find John Crayford standing idle. Some men are above their position in life, and very pitiable objects they are! Lowliness, you know, is never a fault; let a man be low enough, and he is fit for any station."

"I saw Lady Crayford start for her drive, and since her departure I have been wandering about the grounds," Everitt observed, with a wish to account for his long absence from his host.

"Oh yes! she's gone to Sir Archer Wray's, to try and get some money out of the old man," answered his lordship, with the utmost simplicity. "Lady Crayford has lamentably unchristian notions about worldly dignity, and positively she feels it a disgrace to the house that these legal gentlemen are here. For my part, I think she is taking a great deal of trouble about nothing."

The advent of Jackson and Stephen with the luncheon caused Everitt to quit the turning-room, for he had resolved never again to occupy the position of friend of Lord Crayford's favorite companions. So he slipped away, and devoted several hours to letter-writing, and to jotting down certain original thoughts for that great work of his, on "the probable future of England," which, from the wise caution either of the author or the publishers, has not yet seen the light.

When Everitt entered the drawing-room shortly before the hour of dinner, he found not only Emily and Miss Bennet, but Lady Crayford also, with a look of satisfaction on her face, that showed she had sped well on her morning's excursion.

"You are back rather sooner than you expected."

"Yes. I had a very agreeable drive, and found my uncle delighted to see me; he paid me so many delicately expressed compliments that I really, for at least twenty minutes, imagined myself an extraordinarily good woman."

"And what more pleasant pastime is there than making ourselves out to be better than we are? And I am inclined to think that, under certain circumstances, it is a healthy exercise."

"We must be, to some extent, in an amiable frame of mind before we can persuade our self-love that we are angels."

"Well, my dear," said Lord Crayford, entering the room, "you've had your way again, and packed off Mr. Mathers and Mr. Crarl, so I hope you are satisfied."

"Quite satisfied."

"I wish I was, but honestly I am not. They are very honest, simple, devout men, and I must say—"

What Lord Crayford was about to say must remain a mystery, for the announcement of dinner cut his lordship's speech short, and Lady Crayford prevented his resuming it by giving her hand to Everitt, and moving off to the dining-room.

"I suppose you obeyed my orders, and passed our empty stables in review?" observed Lady Crayford.

"I did."

"Sir Archer Wray, among his many kindnesses to me this morning, offered to send over a horse for your use. I need not assure you that I thanked him for his goodness, and begged him to carry his benevolent intentions into effect."

The consequence of the worthy old baronet's politeness was, that before Wolton Hall retired to rest that night, the

arrival of a good riding-horse in the deserted stables was announced, not less to Everitt's satisfaction than to the gratification of the superannuated huntsman.

The next morning, when breakfast had been achieved, and Lord Crayford had retired to his work-shop and paper cap, and the children had been carried off to the school-room by Miss Bennet, Lady Crayford suggested to her guest the propriety of trying his new steed by riding over to Lidacre Priory.

"And you would be making yourself useful to me if you would take this note to Mrs. Ambrose Hill. It will save a post, which, in the matter I desire to interest Mrs. Hill, may be of importance."

Everitt, of course, signified his readiness to obey.

"How will you find out your way across the country? We have no groom we can send with you; for, besides my carriage-horses, that were well worked yesterday, and Arthur's Shetland, and the old market-pony, we positively have not a horse of any kind, save those that are fit only for farm purposes."

"Thank you, I shall manage very well by myself; for, before leaving town, I studied attentively the geography of the country."

"And, with especial care, the road to Lidacre Priory?" asked Lady Crayford, with a smile that brought a little fresh color to Everitt's cheek.

"See, I have the Ordnance map in my pocket," he returned, covering his confusion with frankness.

"I have no doubt you will be invited to pass some days at the Priory. You'll find plenty of amusing society there, and hear every family in the county discussed and picked to pieces in turn. The inmates of that house gossip and talk scandal like the old maids of any village."

"I will keep my ears open, and bring back to you all the ill-natured remarks I hear made."

"Pray don't; for the most cruel will certainly be about me and mine."

"Are you not liked?"

"In a certain way, I think, Wolton Hall is popular; people ridicule and despise it so heartily that they can not help feeling somewhat tenderly toward it. My husband is a standing joke wherever he is known; all the wretched Joe Miller stories of stupid men and actions are tacked to him. At Lidacre Priory you will find that he is believed to be the man who wished, for the sake of his apricots, to have a south wall all round his garden; and the absurd stories you will hear of his intemperance and piety will make you laugh till your sides ache."

"And what shall I hear of you?"

"You'll find all the women whose esteem is worth a moment's care, judging me with severity; and all the contemptible ones—the false hearts, and the hard hearts, and those who have no hearts at all—pitying me, and framing excuses for me. When you see a womanly countenance grow stern at the mention of my name, and hear a quiet voice assert that Lady Crayford loses her own dignity in her vulgar display of contempt for her husband, you may be sure that you are in the presence of a woman worth knowing; but the silly creatures who lament 'that poor Lady Crayford should be tied up to such a foolish husband,' and charitably remark 'that poor Lady Crayford is not to be harshly judged, &c., &c.,' you may set down as very poor things indeed. You understand me?"

"I think so," said Everitt, trying to gaze steadily into her flashing eyes.

There ensued a pause of about two minutes' duration, which the lady broke by saying, "You understand me and my difficulties, and you compassionate me, but your compassion is of a kind that does not hurt my pride: it is masculine in its generosity and noble egotism, and in its freedom

from the virtuous self-sufficiency of feminine commiseration. You, when you contemplate me, don't murmur to yourself, 'Unhappy wretch, how wicked she is! yet she has been tried, though she has not acted so well as I should under like circumstances;' but you put yourself in my position, and honestly declare that, under like troubles, you would be a great deal worse."

Before Everitt could make a reply, a servant entered to say that his horse was ready for him and at the door, an announcement that a little astonished Everitt, as he had not intimated to the servants any wish for a ride.

"They have obeyed *my* orders," said Lady Crayford, answering his look of surprise. "Now be off with you."

By the help of his Ordnance map, so carefully studied, and the easy paces of the elegant horse Sir Archer Wray had put at his disposal, Everitt arrived at Lidacre Priory in time to lunch with a large party of London rustics, among whom were several with whom he was acquainted.

"How delighted we are to see you! and how lucky it is you came over to-day instead of yesterday, when we were nearly all of us away from home. Even Mr. Ambleby deserted the sofa yesterday, and joined a shooting-party," Mrs. Ambrose Hill concluded her cordial welcome by saying.

"Indeed, I can not allow myself to be so misrepresented," lisped Leonard Ambleby, smoothing, as he spoke, his soft whiskers. "The greater part of the day I passed in the billiard-room with Ned Ford, and when he left me for his canter in the park, I retired to a snug corner in the music-room, and went on knitting the purse you admire so much."

"Leonard, I dare affirm as a devout Quaker," put in Jack Treeby, of the Guards, "never let off a gun in his life—no, not even a pop-gun."

"Ah! I can assure you," rejoined Leonard, in a self-complacent voice, "I let off a pop-gun once—but only once—when I was a schoolboy. Mrs. Ambrose Hill, do let me send you just a notch off this sweetmeat."

Everitt looked round the table in search of some one who was not present, and then took possession of one of the vacant chairs, and, admitting the justice of a neighbor's words who charged him with being hungry after his ride, suffered himself to be supplied with a solid piece of venison pasty, and a brimmer of cool Hock.

"You won't leave us to-day?" inquired Mrs. Ambrose Hill, almost in a whisper, as she took a seat by his side.

"Indeed I must. To-day I am nothing more than Lady Crayford's messenger."

"To be sure, you are right; and you are engaged on such very important business—about an old body who wants votes for her admission into an asylum. But you must return soon, and spend several days with us; your doing so will give pleasure to more than one—my husband, as well as myself, will be delighted to have you here. Ah! you seem astonished. Do you think I have not a husband simply because he does not trespass on my freedom? A ship may have guns, though she neither fires salutes with them nor displays them."

With a laugh Everitt assured Mrs. Hill that he did not question the justice of her claims to consideration as the wife of a good man and true, for not many months had elapsed since he had been introduced to Mr. Ambrose Hill.

"We have a ball here next Friday; will you come over to it, and stop for a few days? That arrangement will enable you to renew your acquaintance with Ambrose, who will put you in the way of getting the best hunting the county affords. We shall not have a very remarkable assemblage of beautiful girls for you to be dissatisfied with, but in one who will be here we shall have a host. Miss Leatheby has promised to join us."

"She is not here now?" asked Everitt, with surprise and chagrin.

"She left us last week to pay a short visit at Cleath Manor,

but she and Mrs. Leatheby will return and remain some weeks with me. And, pray, how came you to anticipate the pleasure of seeing her here? You are aware she has only just arrived in England from the Continent?"

"'Over the sea, over the sea,'" answered Everitt, lightly; "'can't you guess what the little bird whispered to me?'"

"Ha! is the queen come to claim her own?"

"God grant she may!"

When Everitt took his leave that day of Lidacre Priory, he did so with the firm conviction that Mrs. Ambrose Hill was a wonderfully good-natured woman; and, as he cantered back to Wolton, through the muddy lanes and over the turf of Hurst Common, he set down the interest that lady expressed in his love-ambition as proof positive of the benevolence of her nature and delicacy of her sentiment. It was clear to him that she regarded his suit with confidence that it would succeed, and it was equally manifest that Frances had made him a subject of especial conversation in her intercourse with her familiar friend.

In such an ecstasy of self-satisfaction was he when he found himself at Wolton, that he found it difficult to refrain from pouring into the ear of Lady Crayford the particulars of his hopes and fears. He managed, however, to hold his tongue, though it is more than probable that her ladyship read a portion of his secret in his excited and triumphant demeanor. Unquestionably she conceived for him a strong liking, and that peculiar sympathy which women, and women only, have for men who are hotly in love.

Men are inexpressibly bored by the erotic phrensies of their associates, and place not the value of six straws on girls who are honestly engaged, and have no hearts to be won; but let a man only swear himself the slave of any Circe, and forthwith he mounts up in the estimation of all the ladies of his acquaintance; all of a sudden they discover innumerable virtues in him: they hang upon his words, and declare the

maudlin egotisms of his long-winded orations the outpourings of a great heart.

At Lady Crayford's amiable instigation, Everitt made arrangements for a prolonged stay at Wolton. A note was sent to London, and without delay there came back in reply an enormous trunk of armor, coats and boots, and divers silken kerchiefs—yea, and also much fine linen!

Among the treasures was the young man's hunting suit, scarlet coat and buckskins such as D'Orsay might have envied; and burnished boots, such as Brummell, in his sporting days, might have beheld with admiration. And now that this garniture had arrived, that he might thoroughly enjoy riding with the hounds, Everitt, who had an insuperable dislike to putting a friend's horse in danger, though he showed little anxiety for his own neck, obtained possession of a decent hunter from a horse-breaker in the neighborhood, with whom the superannuated huntsman of Wolton Hall maintained friendly relations.

He was a superb specimen of a young Englishman, as he turned out, spick and span, at the meets along the countryside. Such muscle and power in his frame; such courage in his eye; and in his aspect such courtly gentleness, as well as bodily strength! It was no wonder that, ere a fortnight had passed over, the style and prowess of the stranger at Wolton Hall were discussed in every hall and stable the district through.

The ball at Lidacre Priory was numerously attended, and was scarcely less brilliant than that to which Everitt had been carried at Mrs. Ambrose Hill's London house, at the close of the previous season. Mrs. Leatheby and Frances did not make their appearance till the dancing-rooms were full. Immediately they entered the first of the suite of apartments given up to the dancers, Everitt's impatient eye was upon them; but for more than two or three minutes they failed to observe him, and he, dallying with his inclina-

tion to hasten forward and greet them, stood in his retired corner and watched them. There she was, lovely as ever, her hair dressed as it was when he had last seen her: there was not a braid of it with which he was not familiar. She was, too, in the same dress, and wore the same flowers that she wore on the occasion of his last beholding her. Could this be the result of chance? or did she intend to intimate by her costume that she was the same in heart and in her affection for him? But Everitt fancied there was an expression of unusual sadness in her delicate face as she gave words of greeting to the many who pressed up to her, paying court to her as a queen; her thin, crimson lips did not curl into that pleasant smile which she used habitually to indulge in when animated by society. What had made the change? Her gaze wandered from the crowd immediately surrounding her, and passed round the room in search for some one; at last it fell where Everitt was, and then he saw the flush tremble with lightning quickness across the whiteness of her cheek, and her fair round shoulders for a moment shudder with agitation.

"She was sorry—she was already engaged," Everitt heard her reply to the great earl of the county, who solicited the pleasure of dancing with her, feeling that in so doing he did her scarcely less honor than his presence did to Lidacre Priory. The next instant her hand was laid on Everitt's arm, and, with a heart beating like a shower of thunderbolts, he led her away in triumph.

"You are not angry, then, with my coming down here in search of you?"

"You seem much afraid of my anger."

"Not because I think it easily roused."

"You need not fear my disapprobation this time, for I do not hesitate to acknowledge that it gave me great pleasure to know you would be here."

She said this with such simplicity that it might have come

from a child's lips to a sister, and she said it with such quiet earnestness that it was—what it was.

"I have much to say to you," she added; "but this evening let us remember there are many eyes upon us, and as many ears ready to catch up our words; so let us speak only on every-day topics. See, there is Canon Dillingborough, with that beautiful little wife of his. Poor girl! why is he not her grandfather?"

Raising his eyes, Everitt saw, for the first time, the Isabel he had so often heard of from his friend's lips, and, even by Frances Leatheby's side, he acknowledged to himself that she was lovely beyond description. But his admiration was swallowed up by other feelings when he saw, a few paces behind the white-headed old canon and his wife, Frederick Dillingborough (how Everitt shivered at the sight of his cold, handsome face!), speaking with Hugh Falcon. Everitt did not withdraw his eyes from the four till Hugh had quitted Captain Dillingborough and led Isabel away from her husband, evidently to join in the quadrille about to commence. *Then* he did take his gaze from them, and, turning it on his partner, he saw that she was watching Hugh and Isabel not less intently than he had been. What it was that pained him he would have found it difficult to state; but the scene he had witnessed—Hugh's easy familiarity as he bent to Isabel, her look of deep gladness as she gave her hand to him, the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough's aged and venerable aspect, and that proud, stern, seemingly self-absorbed man watching them in the background, so smote on Everitt's heart that a sudden sorrow fell athwart his exultation as a black shadow is often seen to bar a sheet of dazzling sunlight.

An hour later in the evening, Hugh Falcon and Everitt's eyes met and exchanged glances for the first time since they parted in the Punch Bowl. With the cordial smile of old times, Hugh nodded and advanced half a dozen paces with extended hand, and with such genuine expressions of good-

will, that Everitt was compelled to respond to the greeting with some approach to warmth.

"How long have you been down here?" Hugh inquired.

"Only a few days."

"Oh! I am regularly fixed in the land. I have already been three weeks at Brandon, and I contemplate staying for as many more."

"I am sorry to hear it," Everitt said, sternly.

"What do you mean, Ecclesiasticus?" rejoined Hugh, lightly, the blood, however, ascending to give the lie to his tongue.

Their conversation went no further, Hugh returning to Isabel, and Everitt betaking himself once more to the side of Frances, who permitted him to lead her away from the noisy dancing-rooms into the conservatory, where half a score couples were flirting away, persuading themselves they were free from the observation of the curious.

"In respect of beauty, I never saw you look better than you do to-night," Everitt observed, in that quiet, plain-speaking manner which is, unquestionably, the best mode of making a personal compliment; "but you have a new air that I can not regard without pain; I am afraid you have not been happy since I last saw you."

"I knew you would not fail to discern that; and if I had been sad from any cause I could not bring myself to tell you, I should have dreaded seeing you. You recollect my letter to you: it was written just before I left London, and before a week had elapsed I told my mother all that had passed between us. Perhaps it was imprudent of me to do so; but I thought so unceasingly about you, my nights were sleepless and my days were spent in such dejection, for you were not near me, that, for the sake of the relief of telling my cares to another, I spoke frankly and fully—far too much so—to my mother."

"Too much so?"

"She begged me never again to say to her I loved you, and implored me not to entertain so wild and ridiculous a scheme as that of becoming your wife."

"And *you?*" asked Everitt, eagerly.

"I could not resist her in argument, and *she* could not shake me in my purpose. But it has, as you see, worn me sadly. She has always, Everitt, been so unspeakably gentle and kind to me; she had never opposed me till then, and even then she uttered no commands, but the most affectionate entreaties. Remember how dependent she is on me for happiness, now in her advanced years and feeble health. Her only glad dream is of my advancement; in her long hours of patiently-endured suffering, the vision of my shining forth in the rank and all the splendor of nobility has long been her constant—I will not say her only—solace. This form of maternal affection may be mean and unworthy, and covered with the trail of worldly ambition; it is not for me so to condemn it; and if her love of me does cover over her passion for display and grandeur, still it is very great, and it is love of *me*, and earthly vanity has no other home in her."

"But you do not waver? You assured me you did not waver."

"I told her," she said, softly, firmly, solemnly, "that I could never love any other than you, and that, by God's help, I would one day be your wife; but that, while she was upon the earth, my first duty and love were toward her, and you should never be my husband until— And I pray God—indeed, Everitt, I do, such is the love I bear her—that, if her mind is not to change on this subject, I may die before you can claim me as your right."

Everitt uttered no reply, but pressed her hand.

"Now let us return to the dancing-rooms. I will sit by the side of mamma, and, for the sake of appearances, will accept the next partner who may offer himself to me, and do you, also, for the same purpose, make pretense of enjoying

yourself away from me. With regard to mamma, behave to her as if I had communicated to you nothing of what I have just confided to you."

There was no disobeying such orders from such a giver; so Everitt, with as unwilling a heart as could well be, observed the directions of his mistress, and, having resigned her to Mrs. Leatheby, philanthropically devoted himself to dancing with the ugliest girls he could find.

These ill-favored maidens, though they were not a little satisfied with the gallant bearing of their cavalier, had no reason to think highly of his mental attainments, for the only compliment he paid them was that of—deferential silence.

Still he was far from being unhappy. What if Mrs. Leatheby did object to him as a match for her daughter? Had he not Frances's own heart? Had he not been assured that he possessed it in terms and in a manner that especially declared her unalterable devotion to him? And how intimately connected he now seemed to be with her inner life; how frankly, fearlessly, confidingly, as if it were only natural he should know all that interested her, had she imparted to him her trial and decision.

By half past three o'clock all the guests who were to return to their houses to sleep had taken their departure; and of the fifty or more who had beds provided for them in the Priory, all the ladies and some of the men had retired to rest, when a young officer in a cavalry regiment proposed an adjournment to his crib for a glass of hot punch. The motion was received with general applause by the majority of the twenty to whom it was addressed, and, in consequence, a general movement was made to "the crib" in question, which, luckily for the fatigued inmates of Lidacre Priory, was in a remote corner at the top of the house. Strange to say, Everitt turned away almost with disgust from the prospect of indulging far into the morning in strong grog, noisy songs, cigars, and perhaps the diversion of cards and dice. There

are times when a man does not know what is for his own good.

Leaving, therefore, the advocates of the revel to go their way, Everitt slipped off by a side passage, and by the aid of a servant, who was a trifle the worse for frequent and rapid alternations between Champagne and strong ale, managed to arrive at his dormitory, which was not the most splendid one in the mansion, being a garret less than five feet high at its loftiest point, and containing (besides a truckle bed, a brown pitcher, and a blue basin) a discarded meat-safe, a pile of tea-chests, and an enormous hamper.

"We shall be very full, but we'll find you a shake-down somewhere," Ambrose Hill had hospitably declared to each of his friends in turn.

In this grotesquely-furnished apartment, Everitt seated himself on his humble couch, and instead of falling asleep, gave himself up to thinking about his charmer and the charmed future that lay before him, unconscious how, as he sat musing on and on, the dusty meat-safe, and ragged hamper, and battered tea-chests looked at him and his solitary candle, and lazily wondered what they were going to do to each other.

Perhaps an hour, perhaps two, he passed in brown study, when he was aroused by a loud rap at the door of the room, and the entry of Leonard Ambleby, with a meerschaum pipe in his right hand.

"Has your voice been assisting to construct those noisy choruses that have been roared in the east wing for the last hour? I am mistaken if the girls, tired as they are with dancing, have not been prevented by them from getting to sleep."

To this rather tetchy address Leonard replied with his one invariable and most sweet smile as he seated himself on the hamper.

"How did you find me out?" Everitt asked.

"A servant was my guide. Certainly you have got into queer quarters: really, I did not know the entire house contained such a kennel as this."

"That dirty hamper will damage your coat," Everitt observed, trusting the remark might cause the exquisite to take his departure.

"I don't care for a paltry coat, my dear fellow, so long as I can be with you," returned Leonard, magnanimously. "You see, I left the east wing because I could not bear the infernal row—noise doesn't suit me: it shatters my nerves—and also I hoped to be able to find you out and have a word with you."

"Indeed! I will gladly listen to you. What is it?"

Leonard laid down his richly-set pipe, smoothed with his hand his silken whiskers, and then, again calling up his faithful smile, that was ever ready to serve him, proceeded to work on to the point he had in view.

"You see, Everitt, we have always been good friends; we have known each other slightly for—dear me! it must be two or three years—any how, an enormous time—and yet we have never quarreled. In point of fact, I have a liking for you, and I flatter myself I am not altogether displeasing to you."

Everitt gave assurances he felt much pleasure at this amicable announcement, and then lapsed into silence and wonderment at what was next coming.

"Did you happen to keep your eye on me to night?" Leonard asked.

"I observed you once or twice, when you were dancing with Miss—yes, with Miss Leatheby."

"Well, you are not angry with me for that?"

"For what? I don't understand you."

"Come, come, Everitt, let us have no nonsense with each other. You know as well as I do that, after Miss Leatheby gave you the go-by this evening, she danced only three times, and each of these three times with me."

"Well?"

"Well!—if you will pardon me for repeating the interjection—well! I am not a vain man: I am quite aware I am not clever, and that my nerves—but I have eyes in my head, which let me know as often as I look in a glass that I am one of the handsomest fellows in London. There is no vanity in my saying that."

"With regard to your personal appearance, I am quite ready to admit that it is distinguished; but, still, I don't see what it is you are driving at."

"Then I'll let you know. Now, of course, every man of the world knows what a woman means when she dances three times with him; and, of course, I should like to have an heiress like Miss Leatheby for my wife. But, honestly, I don't like the thoughts of cutting in against you, and—"

"Pray go on, Leonard," said Everitt, smiling.

"And (modesty not being forgotten), seeing what the lady's inclinations are, it would be an awkward thing for you if I opposed you. So, let us be fair with each other, and toss up to see who is to make the game. Here's a sovereign—now for it—the best two out of three! If you win the toss, I'll leave the coast open for you; if I win, you must act in like manner to me."

To Leonard's amazement, Everitt, instead of treating this liberal offer with the gravity due to a business transaction, threw himself back on his bed and screamed with laughter.

"What do you mean by that noise?" cried Leonard, confounded, and as angry as his mild nature would permit him to be.

"Do you remember making an offer to the two Miss De Veres the same night at Mrs. Dalmaine's ball, and the row you got into with that family in consequence?"

Leonard turned very red, and then white.

"Why, man," continued Everitt, wiping the tears of laughter from his eyes, "Miss Leatheby is their relation, and they told her all about it."

CHAPTER XXV.

BAGLEY-SCRUBBS.

Acting on his laudable resolution never again to be present at the fraternal convivialities of Lord Crayford and his servants, Everitt avoided the turning-room, and made it clear to the inmates of Wolton Hall that he desired to be considered the guest of Lady Crayford rather than of the master of the house.

Lord Crayford himself was not the last to perceive Everitt's determination, and, being displeased with it, was not slow, after the manner of many good people, to condemn it (to Jackson) as the indication of a proud and unsanctified heart; but the worthy nobleman was so accustomed to meet with opposition and disapproval, and was so fully alive to the general iniquity of the human race, that he did not experience much astonishment at his young friend's vain and worldly condition. Moreover, apart from this one point, Everitt, by his frank good-humor, pleased his host in various ways, and so managed to ingratiate himself into his not very inaccessible good-will that a very pleasant understanding existed between them.

If Everitt had not had means of amusement away from Wolton Hall, his sojourn in that hospitable dwelling would have been dull, for only once during the several weeks over which his visit extended was the house opened to receive visitors. That solitary occasion was the annual musical festival which Lord Crayford, aided by his brass band, gave to an audience composed of a few of the minor gentry of the county, and the families of those clergymen who were of Lord Crayford's way of thinking on religious subjects.

On the momentous evening of the concert, Lord Crayford, flushed with the proud consciousness of genius, was indeed a sight to be regarded with tenderness. When, after the guests had taken their seats in the music-room, and the orchestra had made ready to begin, the conductor himself appeared with his burly frame habited in black, with a white waistcoat, cravat, and gloves, and, holding his ivory wand lightly in his hand, bowed profoundly to "the house," smiling meanwhile the smile of fascination, it was unknown to few, even of the most rustic who were present, who the great conductor was whom Lord Crayford modeled himself upon.

"Really," Everitt took occasion to say to his lordship between the first and second parts of the performance, "in spite of the difference between you and —— in stature, your manner so resembles his in the orchestra, that at times to-night I almost fancied I was looking at him."

"You are not the first man who has remarked that!" answered his lordship, with touching simplicity. "And I do flatter myself that I am almost up to ——'s mark. You know he and I are very intimate friends?—oh! we are quite intimate friends, I can assure you!—at least he always speaks to me as such. I could show you hundreds of letters from him, in which he addresses me 'my dear friend;' and, bless you! about the streets of London he'll walk with me arm in arm, just as if he considered me in no way inferior to himself; for there is not one single spark of pride in ——, and I do fully believe he would acknowledge me to be his friend any where."

It was, however, with Lady Crayford and her children that Everitt passed most of his time; and though he and her ladyship did not go the lengths of sentimentalizing to each other, or of throwing away that mutual reserve which it is always wise for casual acquaintances to maintain, they soon got upon a familiar and even affectionate footing. On one subject—his love for Frances Leatheby—Everitt main-

tained a jealous silence, never even mentioning her name to Lady Crayford when he gave her the list of those who were at the Lidacre Ball.

"Where do the hounds meet to-day?" inquired Lady Crayford, one morning, at the early breakfast of Wolton Hall.

"At Bagley-Scrubbs," was Everitt's answer. "But we may not talk about hunting in Lord Crayford's presence."

"It's not the talking about it, it is the doing it that is sinful," interjected his lordship, solemnly.

"I saw poor old Cole as early as six o'clock leading away your hunter to the meet. I do wish the old man had a horse to ride himself."

Lord Crayford groaned.

"Why have you not your scarlet coat on, since you are in your boots and buckskins?" Master Arthur inquired, knowingly.

"He imagines the sight of it would enrage your papa," answered Lady Crayford. "Some people dislike the color as much as wild bulls and turkey-cocks do."

Lord Crayford groaned again, bade Everitt a hasty farewell, and betook himself to the turning-room.

It was a mild day—almost summerly, though in winter, but not close and depressing; the ground was moist with the plenteous rain of many days, and a thin mist rolled to and fro close to the earth; a light breeze was blowing from the south, and, though the sky was cloudy, it was cheerful. Cantering Sir Archer Wray's horse briskly through a labyrinth of lanes, now and then making a cut over a common, and once or twice flying over a broken fence or two, and so clipping off a corner, Everitt was not long in traversing the ten miles between Wolton Hall and Bagley-Scrubbs. Indeed, when he arrived on the ground appointed for the meet, he found he was before the time rather than behind it, as he feared he might be.

A few horsemen were already in their saddles, impatiently pulling out their watches, and looking eagerly into the distance; and a score or more grooms were leading their masters' horses up and down over the soft turf, but as yet the dogs had not made their appearance. Every ten seconds, however, brought fresh arrivals. First, Viscount Boldero came banging along over the swampiest and worst ground he could find, mounted on an ugly roan—a contrast to the high-bred animal that was all ready, waiting for him; then a pair of tandems, conveying cavalry officers from Brandon, dashed up; then a yellow carriage appeared far off; then a green one—full of ladies; then, slipping round the ashes at foot pace, came that sly old fox, Sir Rigby Wright, looking down at his boot-tops; then half a dozen gentlemen cantered up simultaneously on cover hacks; then the master of the hounds; then the huntsman and whips. More carriages in the distance!

"By Jove! there they are at last!" exclaimed Everitt, who had mounted his hunter, and consigned Sir Archer's horse to John Cole.

As he spoke, he dashed his spurs with most unnecessary emphasis into his steed's flanks, and, perfectly careless of the condition of the dogs or the proceedings of the huntsman, galloped across Bagley-Scrubbs to a distant elevation whereon was stationed a stylish but rather too conspicuously painted open carriage, containing two ladies, Mrs. Ambrose Hill and Miss Leatheby.

"I did not expect this pleasure," cried Everitt, pulling his horse up sharp, and raising his hat at the same time.

"We brought Ambrose and a friend over. Have you seen them? They quitted us and mounted at the bottom of the hill, not three minutes since," returned Mrs. Ambrose Hill.

"It seems an unusually numerous gathering; but we dare not draw near to greet our friends, for our horses are young, and not quiet in harness," said Frances, eyeing Everitt's horse

and appointments with approval. "How I wish I could ride with you!"

"Dare you?"

"Do you question my courage?"

"I can find you a horse on the field, and one of the ladies yonder will supply you with habit and hat. Now do come."

"He flatters himself that he can win you to any folly," laughed Mrs. Ambrose Hill, "by mingling with his entreaties taunts on your cowardice. Send away your horse and return home with us, habited as you are. In the eyes of all these men, *dare* you? Ah! you falter!"

"My servant is not here to take my horse."

While Everitt was blissfully occupied talking such commonplaces as the above sentences, and cherishing a half-formed determination to profit by Mrs. Ambrose Hill's banter, and prove his moral courage and chivalric obedience by dismounting and proceeding with her to Lidacre in the carriage, the dogs roused a fox from a corner of the straggling plantation. The deep, exultant voices of the pack, the cries of half a hundred riders, and the tramp of as many horses bursting forth toward the north side of the Scrubbs and Headley Rise, soon made the air alive, and the hearts of all spectators who were not to take part in the sport beat with a quick but uneasy and discontented action.

"They're off! be quick! for, if you lose sight of them, you may find it no easy task to get up at the death," exclaimed Mrs. Ambrose Hill, seeing that Everitt still lingered, though his horse was rearing and preparing to plunge, impatient at the restraint of the curb.

"Am I to follow Reynard or accompany you?" laughed Everitt, looking round to take a farewell glance at the ladies, and at the same time seeing, to his surprise, twenty yards in the rear of the carriage, a horseman bearing down to the Scrubbs at a full, heavy trot, that was in another minute to be changed for a killing gallop.

The horseman had a military seat, not rising in his saddle, though the bounding trot of his powerful black charger over the broken and soaked ground was no easy one. As he dashed past the carriage, he raised his hat to its occupants, smiled sarcastically, and, nodding to Everitt, pointed in the direction of Headley Rise, where the music was now deep and regular.

"Lord Brigden!" exclaimed Everitt.

"Yes, he came over with us," hastily observed Mrs. Ambrose Hill; "we brought him."

Without another word, Everitt let his horse have his head, and in another minute was close behind Lord Brigden. A broad dike ran across the Scrubbs. Before Lord Brigden reached it he was riding at full speed, and he cleared it and the railing that ran along it with one of those flying leaps, to think of which makes the blood even of cripples leap.

"Beautifully done!" exclaimed Frances Leatheby, rising to her feet with excitement. As the words passed her lips, Everitt bounded across the water in even yet more gallant style, and in another minute was riding by the side of Lord Brigden. And so they proceeded up Headley Rise, and out of sight. With mingled, but all of them strong emotions, pride, love—self-love—Frances Leatheby followed with her eyes those two men, so unlike, and yet not without points of similarity, till they disappeared behind the far-off hill-top, and then sinking back in her seat, she closed her eyes as if they were faint with what they had beheld.

"Neck and neck! which will win?" asked Mrs. Ambrose Hill.

"They are not to be compared," Frances Leatheby replied, excitedly, her thin lips twitching as she uttered the words: "how can you for a moment place them side by side? The one is a clever slave as long as you appeal forcibly to his selfishness; but the other is a king—made to rule a world."

"If some one else win it for him."

"He will obtain whatever he earnestly wishes for."

"With one exception."

"Do not laugh."

As the ladies exchanged these words, Everitt and Lord Brigden rode down the other side of Headley Rise, commanding, as they did so, a wide view of the country, the dogs rapidly bowling along in one compact mass a mile and a half before them, the fields dotted with riders, here and there a riderless horse. Tightening his rein as he descended a steep piece of greasy land, and reducing his speed by one half, Lord Brigden turned round in his saddle and addressed Everitt, who was not ten yards distant from him.

"We know the line of country now; it will be straight as an arrow to Hinley, across the walls, and then round toward Whitfield."

"You know this country well."

"Yes; I put an Ordnance map in my pocket before I came down." This reply was made with a significant sneer, and the next moment Bangor carried the speaker over a sunk fence.

"Rather a formidable place that," proceeded his lordship, coolly, as Bangor and Everitt's horse lighted simultaneously on the other side, "and one I should not care to take on a blind horse. You have been down here some weeks; I have had my eye on you. What a queer place Wolton Hall is for a man like you to retire to! What could induce you to visit the Crayfords?"

"Perhaps the same attraction brought you and me here."

"Nay, that can hardly be. I am here more for the sake of seeing you than any thing else."

Everitt was so mad at this insolence that he would gladly have had a fair excuse for throwing the lash of his hunting-whip across Lord Brigden's shoulders; but the provocation by no means warranted such a violent proceeding, so he re-

mained silent, and endeavored to withdraw his attention from his companion and concentrate it on the management of his horse, which already began to suffer from the vehemence of the pace and the heaviness of the country, though Bangor, much to Everitt's annoyance, showed no signs of fatigue. For half an hour they continued to ride in silence, neck and neck, never twenty yards apart, and often not three, and taking their leaps in every case almost at the same moment. The direction was exactly as Lord Brigden had predicted—over the stone walls of Hinley, then up the Enfield hills, and round to Whitfield. The transit over Hinley was nervous work to Everitt, for his horse was fast becoming knocked up, and the walls were high and rotten at the top; but, by good luck and good riding, he got safely over them.

"There are not many ahead of us now, for those walls stopped at least twenty men. I wish you were better mounted, for then I would offer to race you to the death. Ah! hold up, man! My heavens! you are over!"

Lord Brigden's concluding exclamations were caused by Everitt's horse stumbling, through getting one of his fore feet into a hole, and then, after blundering on for twenty yards, trying ineffectually to recover himself, falling down and rolling over his rider.

Instantly Lord Brigden pulled up Bangor, and alighted to render assistance to Everitt, who, instead of springing to his feet, lay extended on the ground. A groan showed that the prostrate man had not lost his life. Catching hold of Everitt's horse just as the animal, having scrambled up, was preparing to gallop off riderless, Lord Brigden gave both the steeds into the charge of a laborer who happened to be at work near where the accident occurred, and then, taking a flask of Cognac from his coat-pocket, raised Everitt's head a few inches, and poured some of the spirit into his mouth. The consequence of this judicious treatment was, that the patient, before many seconds had elapsed, opened his eyes,

and, staring around him with an air of surprise, rose to a sitting posture.

"Take some more of the brandy. You are turning pale again, and will faint if you don't look out what you are after."

Everitt did as he was commanded.

"And now," proceeded Lord Brigden, kindly, "see if you can stand; if you can do that, it will be something."

With difficulty, and one or two involuntary expressions of pain, Everitt rose to his feet, and then, turning to his friend, said, in a faint but decided voice, "I am a bit of a surgeon, and can tell you myself what my injuries are. My left fore arm is broken, and that, if I am not mistaken, is the sum of the mischief."

"That's awkward; but not so bad as having your neck put out of joint," replied Lord Brigden, taking a large silk kerchief from his pocket, and arranging it as a sling.

"Now," he proceeded, "assuming that your judgment is correct, let me put your arm in confinement. But first draw a good breath. Does that hurt you?"

"No."

"Very good. Really this case is so simple that its management will reflect very little credit on me."

Quickly the arm was placed in a sling, which was nicely adjusted—a task by no means so easy as some may imagine, and then, with a smile, the patient was asked how he felt.

"As well as can be expected under the circumstances. But what an excellent surgeon you are!"

"Men take naturally to doctoring, as women do to nursing. And now, can you sit on your horse?"

Everitt would try; and, having tried, he succeeded in climbing to his saddle without much difficulty.

"We are not four miles distant from Wolton; so, it appears to me, Everitt, since you can sit on your horse, that our best plan will be to proceed thither at foot pace, and this

man shall hurry off to the doctor, and tell him to meet us there. Where does the Wolton Hall surgeon live?"

The man luckily knew the surgeon and his abode, and undertook to lose no time in finding him up, and sending him to the Hall; so Lord Brigden, urging him to use all speed, mounted Bangor in order to accompany Everitt. Before starting, however, he inquired of the obliging peasant if he had any money in his pocket.

"Not a penny, your honor," was the answer.

"Come on to Wolton Hall, then, after you have seen the doctor, and I will give you a sovereign."

"Why not give him it now?" asked Everitt, who took much interest in his lordship's proceedings.

"Because, if he makes great speed, I shall have the pleasure of giving him double payment."

The man touched his hat, and, careless of the agricultural interests of his regular employer, went off, briskly running, to obey the orders of his new master.

"The run has so effectually taken it out of your brute, that he will doubtless be glad to walk slowly and quietly; but if you think there is any chance of his capering about, I had better walk at his head, holding the bridle. No? You think that unnecessary? Well, then, here we are. Move on; I know the roads. And now that respectable hind has disappeared, and his feelings can not be wounded by my speaking out, I will inform you that I did not give him money before his work was done, from a fear that he might, so burdened, get no farther on his road to the doctor than the next public house."

After this communication his lordship held his peace for the remainder of the ride, save when, holding the flask of Cognac up to Everitt's lips (a ceremony that was performed every quarter of an hour), he authoritatively bid him take a sip. But the care with which he kept guard over his patient was as watchful as it was unobtrusive. No carriage

passed them in the lanes but he instinctively put his hand out, ready to seize the head of Everitt's horse if he started; and, without allowing it to be seen that he troubled himself about so trifling a matter, he took care that the horse always walked on the smoothest tracks of the deeply-rutted roads.

To Everitt, the four or five miles seemed an interminable distance; for not only was his arm very painful, especially about the wrist (the wristband Lord Brigden had unbuttoned), but he was afflicted with a distressing singing in the ears, and a nausea that made him every moment apprehensive of fainting.

At last Wolton Hall was reached, and Everitt was lifted from his horse by Lord Brigden and Jackson in a condition of extreme prostration; and scarcely had they borne him into the hall and placed him on a sofa than he lost consciousness.

"Where is Lady Crayford?" asked Lord Brigden.

"Out for a drive, my lord; and she won't be back till dinner."

"So much the better. Let no one inform Lord Crayford of what has happened. Now help me to carry him up to his bed-room; the doctor will be here directly."

When Everitt recovered his senses, he found himself lying in bed, with a surgeon and Lord Brigden busy examining his injuries. As he himself had supposed, the only bones broken were those of his fore-arm, but the fracture was a very awkward and a compound one; and, in addition to this, the system had received such a violent concussion, that the medical man was quite justified in shaking his head, as medical men do.

With all possible expedition, the ends of the broken bones were brought into juxtaposition, the limb was set, copious venesection was performed, a composing draught was administered, together with other medicines, and the patient was enjoined to go to sleep—if he could.

And, in obedience to the medical man's injunction or the influence of the opiate, soundly asleep did Mr. Everitt Brookbank fall, and in slumber he remained for some considerable length of time. When he awoke, night had closed in, the curtains of his bed-room windows were drawn, and a dimmed lamp was the sole source of light to the apartment.

"Don't move, sir, or you'll hurt your arm," softly enjoined Lady Crayford's maid: "my lady told me to be very particular you did not stir."

"I won't move," replied Everitt, as the remembrance of the events prior to his sleep came to him.

"Let me give you this cup of broth, sir, for you were to have it immediately you awoke, my lady said."

"She is very good; and please tell her I say so."

Having taken the broth like a good boy, and been informed that it was eight o'clock in the evening, he closed his eyes and once more attempted to sleep. But this second time his somnolent endeavors were unsuccessful; sleep would not come; and as the minutes and hours slowly wore on, he grew very restless and excited.

By midnight he was in a high fever that was fast running into delirium. He was aware of people coming into the room with soft steps; once the visitor was the doctor, or some one very like the doctor, accompanied by a strangely beautiful and unknown lady; he was aware that every now and then doses of fever medicine were administered to him, and that his nurse's hand was constantly engaged in making some little arrangement for his comfort; but his attention was especially directed to innumerable strange phantasmagoria that would not allow him a moment's peace.

One after another, all the articles of furniture in the dim room turned into wild beasts, and coming from their appointed places, and roaring loudly, sprung at him; but they none of them actually fixed their teeth and claws in his flesh, for the very instant they were about to touch him, they changed

into a mysterious figure—a cipher representing a number he had never met with in arithmetic. Each animal turned into the same figure; and as soon as they were so metamorphosed, they glided off to the side of his bed, the ciphers that had been male animals going to the right, and the ciphers that had been female animals stationing themselves on the left.

So it went on till the entire list of savage beasts known in nature was exhausted, and then—wonder on wonders! the mysterious ciphers collected together from both sides, in the centre of the bed, and ate each other up, till at last only one enormous cipher was left, and that slowly vanished out of sight. Every time this took place—and, upon the whole, it must have happened several hundreds of times—just as the enormous cipher vanished, Everitt said, aloud, "Ah! that is the everlasting unity," and for a few seconds he would then appear satisfied.

Toward morning the menageries had all taken their departure, and another not very pleasant illusion was repeated again and again, without any variation. The sick man imagined he was riding a race with Lord Bridgen over the clouds, right into the very apple of the sunset, and the winner was to have Frances Leatheby for a prize.

What a vapor chase it was! How they continually were thrown from their horses, and, after falling for miles and miles through the air, without striking against any obstacle, were wafted up again to the aerial race-course! At last, Everitt won by at least a length and a half, and Frances advanced to surrender herself to him, accompanied by legions of beautiful and white-robed maidens. But just as he was on the point of taking her outstretched hand she turned into a portable shower-bath, whereupon the thought struck him that he would enter it, and be refreshed by its cool rain; but before he could do so, the shower-bath, strange to relate, got into him by an entrance made through the soles of the feet,

and gradually mounting higher and higher, grew out the crown of his head in the form of gigantic turnip-tops. And all this conduct was so unlike the ordinary demeanor of his Frances, that Everitt exclaimed bitterly, and would have risen up and gesticulated in his agony, had not a firm hand held him back, and a warning voice repeated in his ear, "Mind your arm: don't move it! mind your arm: don't move it!"

At last even the consciousness of these mad fancies left him. When he next woke from his slumber, or some state more like and nearer death, it was day—he could see that much, though the curtains were partly drawn over the windows—and by his side who should there be but Lady Crayford, more beautiful, because more gentle, than her wont.

"My dear Lady Crayford, I think more of your kindness in being here than the honor you confer on me."

"Don't trouble yourself to say pretty things," said her ladyship, "but take this tea."

He drank the tea, and it refreshed him very much, seeming to go straight to his faint head with comfort and stimulus, and then he asked what day it was.

"You met with your accident the day before yesterday," was the answer; "this is a Friday."

"I am afraid I have been delirious, and have talked a great deal of nonsense," said Everitt, coloring.

"You have not let out any secrets," answered his nurse, with emphasis.

"You need not be alarmed at my delirium, for when I am attacked with fever my brain is sure to suffer."

"Fever always attacks the weakest part of the frame," rejoined Lady Crayford, with a smile that caused Everitt to smile also.

The doctor soon made his visit, and so pleased was that good man with the condition of his patient that he treated the whole affair in a jocular manner, asking Everitt if he

would take a bottle of port or claret after his dinner; though, before he quitted the apartment, he prudently ordered him to indulge in no stronger potation than chicken-broth.

Two more days passed over without a bad symptom, and with no more important event to Wolton Hall than the arrival of servants from Lidacre Priory, and other adjacent houses, with inquiries for the wounded man; and, upon the third evening, Everitt was allowed to sit up to eat his dinner, and to receive a visit from Lord Crayford.

On first entering the room, that amiable nobleman expressed his sincere concern for his friend's mishap by bursting into tears; but as soon as ocular demonstration and the hale sound of the patient's voice convinced him that immediate death was not impending, his lordship went into another extreme of boisterous congratulation, and expressions of contempt for the trivial nature of the accident; and, finally, so convinced was he that all Everitt needed for the complete establishment of his health was the stimulus of congenial society, the hospitable man was with difficulty restrained by Lady Crayford from ordering his band up stairs to play a few stirring airs in Everitt's chamber.

"Anyhow," exclaimed his lordship, when he had been compelled to promise not to carry this scheme into execution, "I'll sup here with you. Jackson and Stephen shall bring up a devil at half past nine o'clock, and then a bottle or two of my yellow seal can not hurt us."

"Indeed, my lord, I must decline your proffered kindness, for I am very weak, and ought forthwith to leave my sofa and return to my bed."

Upon this announcement Lord Crayford could no longer desire to carry out his festive intentions; so, with many cordial squeezes of Everitt's right hand, and sympathetic tears in his own eyes, he rose and departed.

"It is now nine o'clock," said Lady Crayford, when her

husband had quitted the room. "Would you like to go to bed now? in which case I will send you your servant; or would you prefer to sit up half an hour longer?"

"I think it will do me no harm to remain up for another thirty minutes."

"Good! Another messenger with inquiries after your state arrived from Lidacre within the last hour, and he brought a note for—"

"Yes," exclaimed Everitt, eagerly.

"For me," continued Lady Crayford, "and another for you. Here, I dare say you will value it highly."

Everitt snatched up the note that was given him and tore it open. "Thank God! both yesterday and to-day the reports have been good. Do write a line if you can, *with your own hand*, to assure me that I am not deceived as to your improvement. I can think of nothing but you.—FRANCES LEATHEBY."

"A pretty handwriting is Frances Leatheby's," said Lady Crayford, quietly, when Everitt had twice perused the above note; "a pretty hand, but not much character in it."

"How do you know Miss Leatheby wrote the note?" inquired Everitt, with flashing eyes.

"The writing is not disguised, and I am familiar with it."

"Indeed!"

"Frances and I are old friends and correspondents."

"How came you never to say so?"

"How came you never to mention her to me, though you were sufficiently communicative about all Mrs. Ambrose Hill's other guests?"

"Did I not speak about her?"

"Everitt Brookbank, you profess to love her?"

"Profess!"

"Hush! hear me out. I know you have made her an offer, and she has given you reason to believe that, sooner or later, she will be your wife. Your honor is not concerned

in denying this, for her own letter to me informed me that such was the case. Tell me now, honestly, do you really and truly, from your inmost heart, love her?"

"Bless you! I love her! It is only her money I care for. Perhaps I care a little for her beauty—every man's vanity is tickled by having a good-looking wife. But, of course, I should not care a button for her without her wealth."

"Well done for a pupil of Lord Brigden!" was Lady Crayford's mocking answer to this bitter speech. "Admirable sarcasm! your master himself could not construct better!"

"You know Lord Brigden also?"

"A little—just a little. Good-night!'

"Stay—stay—for one minute more."

"Good-night!'

The door closed upon her; and, as it was impossible for Everitt to pursue her, he made a signal with his hand-bell, which brought the attentive servant who had charge of him into his room.

"I wish to get back to bed again."

Soon he was once more on his couch, a restless one no longer; and after the servant, having put the night-light in its proper shady corner, had retired, the convalescent lay between sleeping and waking for many minutes, musing on the last words of that extraordinary woman, Lady Crayford.

"Don't be startled," said a soft voice at his bed's head.

"Ah! Lady Crayford! I did not hear you enter."

"I did not intend you should hear me; for, if you had been asleep, I should have been sorry to arouse you. I have come back to tell you something that will send you to a sleep of happy dreams."

"Of Frances?"

"Do not permit any idle words I uttered an hour since to vex you. *You* know how great a treasure her heart is; *and I*, her friend, know well how truly she loves you. Good-night again."

Everitt caught hold of her hand as she turned to go away, and pressed it to his lips. She stopped, and for a few moments looked into his countenance as he lay in the visible dimness of the room; and then she stooped, and kissed him between the eyes, as she might have saluted her child.

"God bless you, Everitt Brookbank!" she said, earnestly. "You are a noble-hearted young man; and I am sure great happiness is in store for you."

And with these words she departed as quietly as she came.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FACE TO FACE.

The fever having taken its departure, Everitt rapidly progressed in the right direction; the broken bones uniting, and his strength returning. No sooner had he reached this desirable condition than he wrote two letters, one to his father, informing the old man of the fall and its consequences, and another to Lord Brigden, thanking him for the careful solicitude he had displayed on the day of the catastrophe.

In reply to the former epistle, old Captain Brookbank urged his boy to come, as soon as he was able to travel, into Devonshire, even for a few days only, if he could not stop longer; and the same post that brought Everitt the paternal letter presented him also with one of Lord Brigden's characteristically laconic notes.

"Dear Brookbank,—Thank God! you are in a way to be all right again soon. Do not be in a hurry to use your arm till you are sure you may trust to it. Change of air's the thing for you. What do you think of doing? B."

"Lidacre Priory" was written at the bottom of this brief note; and it must be confessed that, as Everitt saw those

two words, a sharp twinge of disapprobation passed through his heart.

"No news to give me out of your letters, my dear?" inquired Lord Crayford of his wife, as he rose from the breakfast-table, at which Everitt was again present.

"Nothing," was the answer; "only some womanly gossip about dancing, and ball-dresses, and such sinful things."

The tone of this reply gave Lord Crayford to understand that his lady was in a less amiable frame of mind than usual; so, packing into his pockets the morning's supply of reports from charitable societies, prospectuses of religious associations, and begging letters (of which interesting literature every post was sure to bring him a plentiful assortment), he rose, and bustled off to his much-loved turning-room.

"Your letters do not please you," said Lady Crayford to Everitt, when the door had closed on her husband. Miss Bennet and the children had already departed for the school-room.

"One—from my father—pleases me very much. He urges me to pay him a visit."

"It is the best thing you can do."

"How? Are you anxious to get rid of me?"

"Yes, you've been here quite long enough. The purpose of your visit has been answered; Frances Leatheby has seen you, and given you all the assurances you desired. *Now* you had better go. I am growing tired of you."

Everitt burst out laughing, and so did her ladyship.

"However we may laugh, I mean what I say," she proceeded firmly, but more good-naturedly; "the simple fact is, I want to have the house free from your observation. Perhaps Messrs. Mather and Crarl are about to pay me another visit, and occupy your room; or perhaps Lord Crayford has made up his mind to entertain half a score penitent convicts. Anyhow, you know enough of my strange life to be sure that I may have very good reasons for desiring you to depart im-

mediately, and, at the same time, for hoping that we may see much more of each other."

"My dear Lady Crayford, I do not require further assurances of your goodness to me. Then I must bid you adieu to-day?"

"No, stop till to-morrow, when, directly after an early breakfast, you shall be driven over to the station. I shall be sorry for the loss of your society, but it comforts me to know that your especial ends can not be served by your prolonging your stay here, for Frances will leave Lidacre immediately."

"Indeed!"

"Yes; I have received a letter from her this morning, in which she says that they have quite changed their plans, and that she shall be in town by the end of the week."

"Do you know if Lord Brigden will remain at Lidacre?"

"Frances does not mention his name—*he* is your correspondent," the lady replied, with a slightly sarcastic emphasis. "Now I must leave you for a time. Will you take a drive with me after luncheon?"

Mr. Everitt Brookbank would be happy to do so.

The next morning the carriage was at the door at half past eight o'clock, and as Everitt stepped into it to be conveyed to the train, he saw that it was well stocked with game. At the hall windows were stationed Lady Crayford and the children, to look adieu to the departing guest, and on the hall steps the servants had congregated to give him an honoring farewell, and among them stood the burly, foolish, well-intentioned proprietor of the mansion.

"My boy—my darling boy, you are a boy after my own heart. You may have a little of Satan's pride lurking in you, but one day severe chastisement will take it from you, and then you'll be perfect," said the worthy lord, with many pauses, caused by emotion, and with tears running down his cheeks. "God bless you! you'll find in the carriage a small

deal box containing one of John Crayford's patent coffee-biggins, made in the very best style, bronze, with gold ornaments. Accept it in remembrance of me. Although I say it, it's the best coffee-biggin that human ingenuity has constructed—in fact, it's unrivaled. Heaven protect you, my boy! Take the coffee-biggin, and be happy!"

The carriage drove off, and soon got clear of eye and ear; the servants separated, and disappeared from the hall door; the children went to their lessons, and Lord Crayford to his turning-room.

"He is well off; at least, I have one thing to be thankful for," said Lady Crayford, energetically, when she again found herself alone.

It was not an idle day with her ladyship; her time, indeed, was usually fully occupied, for she had an unruly house to preside over, expensive servants to keep in order, lazy ones to make expeditious, and insolent ones (whom Lord Crayford would not part with) to check into something like submission. If the stories that floated about the neighborhood concerning the methods she resorted to to maintain discipline could be credited, it would have to be told that, when the emergency required such active treatment, she made light of soundly rating a negligent footman, and thought no more of administering a hearty slap to a saucy cook-wench than she did of giving Master Arthur a horsewhipping. Probably many of these statements were exaggerations; but the lady will not be wronged if we conclude that, in her government of her numerous establishment, she displayed such courage and energy as are invaluable qualities in the women of an infant state, but are rarely found in active exercise in the daily life of English gentlewomen. To-day, however, every thing went harmoniously, and, after luncheon, Lady Crayford seated herself in her *own* little drawing-room, in what she tried to think a very equable frame of mind, to await the arrival of a caller.

At last the expected wheels were heard, and a carriage

rattled up to the front door. It was one of the Lidacre Priory carriages, with abundance of luggage before and behind, on the box with the coachman, and in the rumble with a maid. Who was in it? The door was opened by Jackson, the steps were let down, and out came Frances Leatheby, covered with much rich white fur, the weather being as cold as even the good old English winters used to be.

In another minute the visitor was face to face with Lady Crayford.

"Frances, my dear girl, how very glad I am to see you!" exclaimed the latter, with cordial vehemence.

Frances smiled that formal but fascinating smile which very good-looking women so universally make use of, sometimes out of general amiability, and sometimes out of indolence, because it happens to be the easiest way of throwing expression into their features. Let young men study well this smile, and learn how little it means!

"You will stop and dine with me, at least? or have you not changed your mind, and arranged to sleep here?" continued Lady Crayford, when she had exchanged kisses and embraces with Frances.

"No, thank you, Ann," the younger lady responded, "I can not remain more than an hour with you, though, till an hour before leaving Lidacre, I had hoped to make use of your offered bed. I must reach London, and have an interview with my lawyer before midnight."

As she said this she seated herself on the sofa, and, unfastening the loops of her fur cloak, let it drop half way off her shoulders, and again she smiled and fixed her eyes as she would have done on any man she did not care for, but only wished to be polite to.

"Bless me! Frances, nothing wrong, I hope. Has Rothschild summoned you to town to negotiate a loan? or have some of those miserable lodging-houses for the Irish, which you bought last year, been burned down?"

No answer was deigned; but the compression of Frances's thin lips and the angry twinkling of her eyes showed that the arrow had struck home.

"Still," resumed her ladyship, "I must say, I am sorry you can not stop, for, now that Mr. Brookbank has left us, I shall not have many sociable evenings for months to come."

"Oh! Mr. Brookbank gone?"

"Yes; he returned to town by an early train, and I trust by to-morrow he will go down into Devonshire. I sent him away, so that you might not meet him here."

"Indeed! why?"

"He loves you. He is an ardent, generous, guileless young man, and he believes you to be the dove you look. He does not know you so well as I do."

A gleam of pleasure and triumph lighted Frances's face as she answered, with forced mockery, "You tell me good news; better, perhaps, than you think."

"Of course you like to be assured of his foolish passion, for *you love him.*"

"Then why keep us apart?"

"Because you wished to be brought together—at least for an hour this morning. I know your game well! you'll never marry him—for he has not money enough to buy you, and you can never make a tool of him. Tush! you never need fear exposing yourself to me, for I have studied you well—ay, from the time you practiced usury in the nursery, and made loans at cent. per cent. to your governess. It is a satisfaction to me, Frances Leatheby, hating you as I do, to be aware that you are doomed to love a man your avarice will not permit you to marry."

"Dear Lady Crayford, you show your enemies the full acrimony of your feelings; believe me, it is not good policy to do so: it puts them on their guard; and if they are not more amiable than yourself, it may give them pleasure to see the worm gnawing your heart. And you are too hard on

me. It is not every woman who plays false to a penniless lover, and marries an imbecile lord."

"Good!" thought Frances, "you felt that, my dear Ann, or flashing eyes and pallid cheeks mean nothing."

"And, thank Heaven!" continued Frances, in the mildest of her many musical voices, "no one can say that *you* did that, for, as every one knows, the case with you was very different; you accepted the poverty-stricken suitor, and when you lost your money, *he* threw you away like a bad glove. But to speak again of myself: you tell me the man I shall not marry; now show me who is to possess me as his chattel."

"Have I the complexion of a gipsy?"

"No, my dear, you have only the beauty and prophetic spirit of one. Mrs. Ambrose Hill banters me with the frequent repetition of Lord Brigden's name. Now, do you think I shall ever consent to make use of him? You'll own he's mean enough for the servile offices I should require of him."

In a voice of deep and cruel meaning these last words were spoken, though the speaker maintained a perfect placidity of manner, and her face, so neat and accurate in its delicacy, was as calm as the simplest and most innocent girl's could be.

"Come, to please you, I'll make a prophecy, my child," answered Lady Crayford, trying, or feigning to try, to be unmoved. "*You'll never be Lady Brigden.* You'll find, sooner or later, that you flatter yourself. Lord Brigden has played with many women in his time, and flung them away like, to borrow your own metaphor, old gloves; and when he has fooled you to the top of your bent, you'll then be only one of half a hundred. You rely too much on his smooth words and tender promises."

"His truth and mine you regard with the same disdain."

"No, Frances; charity can make excuses for him."

"Why should charity question his veracity now?"

"I'll tell you, and then I'll say no more. He is waiting

for another. 'I bide my time,' is his motto. Now, my dear girl, do not be angry, and let us change the subject."

A flash of amusement, and an expression as if she had made a discovery, crossed Frances's features; but, in compliance with Lady Crayford's wish, she did not pursue the subject farther.

Laying aside their weapons of warfare, the two friends spent half an hour in the formalities of "morning-call conversation," and then Frances Leatheby declared that she must forthwith proceed on her journey.

"I shall not forget your warning," she observed, with a laugh, as she buttoned up her fur cloak round her neck previous to departing. "Thank you for it; it may be useful to me."

"Mock on, my dear; I am content to be Cassandra."

In a few minutes the carriage had conveyed Frances Leatheby away from Wolton Hall, and Lady Crayford was once more left to the solitary enjoyment of her own thoughts. Her ladyship had no other caller that day, nor had she any visitor during the next four-and-twenty hours, but at the close of the third day, as she was taking walking exercise on the terrace, in the fast-deepening shadows of evening, a horseman, followed by a mounted groom, rode up to the hall, and alighted a few paces from her.

"Ah! Lady Crayford, I am come to join you in your walk for a few minutes," said he, approaching her, after he had given his bridle to his servant's hands.

"I am glad to see you, Lord Brigden," she answered with cordiality, but also with a peculiar composure; "a companion is what I was just wishing for."

They moved away from the servant, and when they had got beyond the man's hearing, a change came over the manner of both, and they greeted each other again with greater warmth.

"It was rash of you, Charles, to come here."

"I knew that Lord Crayford was not at home, for the paper informed me, last week, he was to spend to-day at a missionary meeting at Biddleton; and, besides, he is too good a man to retain his jealousy of me after so many years. Why have you not written?"

"Because I was determined to have a letter from you before I sent you another."

"Well, she was here the day before yesterday; what report have you to make?"

"She is yours—beauty, and fortune, and all—except her heart; that's another's."

"Her heart I do not care about; it's quite immaterial to me where she bestows that.

"'But oh! her thoughts on others ran,
And that you think a hard thing;
Perhaps she fancied you the man,
And what care I a farthing?
You think she's false, I'm sure she's kind;
I take her body, you her mind—
Who has the better bargain?'

You recollect Congreve's song?"

"Well, I am glad to see you so content."

"I should not like to have her incapable of love, for then she would, of necessity, be without those more refined intellectual qualities that I shall require in my wife for many purposes; and I should not like her to burden me with her affections, for what is a more galling load than the love of those we do not care for? indeed, the love of those who possess our hearts is as great a curse as a blessing! Then what better thing can she do than give her heart to a man who is too honorable ever to use it to injure or annoy me?"

"For such a woman to sell herself for wealth and rank!"

"I can not altogether be angry with her. She delights me by being so rare a curiosity. I have a taste for paradoxes and anomalies, yet I never met or heard of any other

woman who, with the most delicate exterior and tastes, combined such masculine intellect and immorality. But what convinces you she will have me for a husband?"

"She will make you marry her for the sake of triumphing, as she imagines, over me. Only the other day she was talking of making you her slave, and positively ridiculed me for having been thrown off by you."

"What has made you so ready to serve me in this matter as you have done?"

"First, you commanded me; secondly, I wished to revenge myself on her."

"Revenge?"

"Ay; I know the bitterness of the lot that is before her. She thinks that when she is married you will take to your amusements and she to hers, and that, having only the common interest of worldly advancement, you and she will harmoniously agree to mutual indifference in all other matters. But she does not know what a servitude she is preparing for herself. I have learned by experience what such a matrimonial life is."

These words were followed by a sigh; and the two companions paused in their walk, and, standing still, were silent some time.

"How wasted, jarred, useless have been our lives! how different, Ann, from what we imagined they would be when I was a hopeful youth, and you a fresh, ardent girl! and yet, how could we have acted other than we did? Your poor father lost *his* wealth and *yours* too; I was all but penniless; and we parted: the doing so cost us both a bitter pang."

"We acted after the light of our generation."

"Ah! *of our generation*—and what a generation it was! Oh, that I had been born thirty years later! I might have been such a man as that boy, Everitt Brookbank, whom I am ever sneering at, and before whom I hector and swagger like the wretched Bobadil that I am."

"And I?" inquired Lady Crayford, sadly and with a smile.

"God bless you, Ann," he answered, tenderly, taking her hand and pressing it to his lips, "it is impossible for any thing better than you were to exist. Often—how often!—in my barren, wicked life have I wished that we had both died in the young bloom of our affections!"

"Charles, think—even now—where you are," she rejoined, abruptly, dashing the tears from her eyes; "are you fully informed what a woman it is you are about to link yourself to?"

"Quite; I know her, to her most secret imaginations; and Satan himself might glory in such a bride. Moreover, Ann, if she had been other than she is, I do assure you I would have given her up to Everitt, if for no other reason, that my life may be marked at least by one unselfish act. It may seem ridiculous in me to say so; but, honestly, it will be a satisfaction to me to know that, in marrying her to serve my own worldly interests, I also secure a younger and a nobler man than myself from being bound to such a thing. Oh, we shall do; my house shall once again be a great one!"

"And so you close your days a victim of the love of acquisition?"

"Speak not scornfully of the vice; it is the only gratification that satisfies mortals. Wine—women—the intellectual pleasures—you find men rush to them, revel in them, get sated with them, and desert them forever. But man, once imbued with the love of acquisition—be it of money or power—never leaves her for another mistress. Give me the passion, then, that increases just in proportion as it is indulged, even to the grave."

"You must go now; I do not wish you to remain with me longer."

"I obey; but first, Ann, in remembrance of old times, let me present you with this case: it contains your diamonds."

"My diamonds!"

"Yes; those you were forced to part with to Frances years back: *some* I bought in Paris more than a year and a half since, and *some* I found up in London. This will convince you that I have been pretty close on our fair friend's track. And remember, Ann, do not be downcast for the future of your children; yours is a hard lot with that poor fool—your husband; but, thank God! your children take after you, not him, and I will see after their advancement as they grow up."

Having made her close her hands round his gift, he turned away without another word, and remounting his horse, rode rapidly over the park. And Lady Crayford, after she had watched him as he disappeared in the obscurity of the dusky evening, left the terrace and re-entered the hall—the home of her blank existence.

CHAPTER XXVII.

TWO PORTRAITS.

We must now return to a friend of ours who has not appeared for many pages—Emily Allerton. She is still in the house in Regent's Park where we have several times seen her, and she is still performing those same unvaried duties that have before been enumerated. But the time is fast coming when she will have to look for another occupation in place of the old one taken from her.

Week by week, even day by day, the old man has been perceptibly sinking, his small remains of intelligence dwindling down from less to less, and the very disease of his shattered mind losing its once energetic characters. Less irritable, less violent he has certainly become, but the change arises, not from the resuscitation of any good quality of his nature, but the tedious dying out of all vital power. His toilet, his collections of toys, even his glossy wigs and bright

boots, have ceased to interest him, and for hours together, when he is awake, he pays no attention to any person or object. No longer does he care to stammer and babble out disjointed jargon about the *beau monde* in which his youth was spent; about titled beauties, noble libertines, brilliant wits, that have all been swept away, and are almost forgotten; about delicate forms, each now in its separate dress of flannel; about silky tresses, long since dressed for the last time, and in a fashion St. James's never beheld; about bright eyes of genius, that now look up at coffin-lids—of these he never speaks. Perhaps, even within his dark and feeble mind, he thinks of them—not as they *were*, but as they *are*—for in his protracted fits of silence he often weeps plenteously, and sometimes, folding his thin hands together over his breast, seems to express a wish to pray. And ever, as he makes this devout movement, Emily kneels by his bed, and repeats the words of that prayer Nancy under the church-porch said to "Our Father who is in heaven;" but he can not follow her; it is his punishment, he may not pray—no, not even for himself. Very rarely is he moved from his couch; for to gaze out from the window on the park lively with carriages and human figures depresses him, and makes him long to crouch away in a dark corner.

With affection strongly dreading what must be, and with reason faintly suggesting that what must be is God's will, and therefore is best, Emily awaits the approaching change, well knowing that it is at hand. Oh! if before the last dark day, she thinks, his intelligence might be restored, and he might quit the world with contrition at his heart, and acceptable entreaties on his lips! It is no slight comfort to her that his dislike to her has vanished, and given place to trustful love. It is true, he does not know her as his child; but whenever she approaches him he turns to her with some vague sign of satisfaction, and at night he can not fall asleep unless her hand is in his.

There are others besides Emily who see that the dark curtain is about to drop. The servants daily commune with each other in their obscure and private corners down stairs, exchanging gloomy, and sometimes self-interested sentiments, in low, sepulchral voices, and with a brisk punctuation of sighs and moans. Speaking of Emily, they wonder "she can abear it as she du; for their parts, they in like sitiwation should be more tender." The austere maidens, of whom mention has already been made, find a pleasing excitement in "poor Mr. Allerton's closing state," and they call more frequently than ever on Emily, to tell her "to kiss the rod," and, above all things, to avoid popery. At last, even Emily's mild temper can bear it no longer, and she entreats those earnest friends to let her alone, at least for a few days. But she does not refuse the encouragement of other visitors. Daily George Hassell makes his appearance in the gloomy house, and never leaves it without a blessing on his manly goodness; and Mr. Harvey calls frequently (not to say much, for what in such a case can words do?), sometimes coming alone, and sometimes bringing with him Kate Nugent, with whom little Arthur is now staying at Elm Cottage.

The cold spring winds are blowing, and beneath their biting influence the twigs of the trees that come earliest to leaf are putting out their shoots, even as human nature often makes the first advances to a virtuous and beautiful existence in spite of poverty and cruel circumstances. Very cold it is—hale men say so, as they button up their collars in the streets, and walk briskly on; shivering mendicants feel so, as they hold out their hands for pence, keeping one eye out for benevolent wayfarers, and another for hostile policemen; aged invalids grumble so, as in their warm chambers they cough away their wretched dregs of life. But, strange to say, old Mr. Allerton seems somewhat revived, and has for the last two or three days given signs almost of reason.

To-day, and almost as early as noon, he quits his bed, and

is lifted by his servant into a chair by the fireside. In his thick flannel dressing-gown over his other garments, he sits with his daughter close to him, watching the flames, and smiling complacently at them. After a while he raises his head, and is attracted by the reflection of his own person in the looking-glass. It apparently alarms him, for he stretches out his hands with agitation, and earnestly stutters out some incoherent words.

"It is only *yourself* in the glass," explains Emily, catching at his meaning, and speaking very distinctly.

For a moment he looks very angry, and tries to contradict the assertion with unintelligible sounds; then he points spasmodically across the room to a mahogany escritoire, and attempts to rise from his seat.

"Be quiet, dear papa, I will wheel you," says Emily, pushing the easy-chair over the carpet to the escritoire, which she speedily opens, wondering what her father can desire to do.

With unsteady hands he pulls out a drawer containing letters and papers of no importance, and then putting his hand into the space from which he has taken the drawer, he touches a spring that Emily was not aware formed a part of the piece of furniture. Instantly a piece of wood flies from the side of the writing-table, displaying a small receptacle that contains a treasure which the old man seizes eagerly. It is an admirably-executed miniature of a young officer, in a gorgeously splendid uniform, and the frame in which it is set is studded with diamonds.

With a countenance of intense pleasure he shows it to Emily, who recollects having seen it once before—years ago, in her childhood. It is the picture of what the old man was, when, in his youth and rare beauty, he held a commission in the cavalry.

Emily attempts to get the miniature into her hand, but, with a glance of jealousy and fury, her father repulses her,

and then returning to the consideration of it, he is speedily lost in the study of its features. Uneasy at the occurrence, Emily quietly, and without being observed, hangs some drapery over the mirror, so that her father may not again behold his own resemblance; but scarcely has she achieved this arrangement, when he turns his eyes to the veiled glass, and then with a perplexed expression removes them to Emily. Seeing from his manner that her presence annoys him, she makes a feint of leaving the apartment, and then, retiring to a distant spot, where he can not see her, watches him.

Stretching forth his right arm as far as he can as soon as he imagines himself free from observation, he manages to get the drapery in his grasp, and to pull it from the mirror, which once again shines before him, and shows him a wasted, palsied, hideous old man. With an air of surprise, of incredulity, of curiosity, he surveys the apparition in the glass, and then bringing up the miniature to his eyes, compares the two portraits. Ay, they are two distant points! where is the picture of all that is between them?

An hour has passed—slowly—very slowly to the watcher, but still he calmly sits, turning his head to and fro—now looking at the one portrait, and now at the other. His body does not move; the palsy does not shake his hands; some power nerves him for this last exercise of his intelligence; his head is the only part of him that stirs.

Another hour has passed, and still he remains in the same position. Emily's knees tremble beneath her, and she is faint with keeping guard; she would fain leave her corner, but she is afraid of disturbing him. The fire is burning low in the grate; it will soon be out—very soon; in another minute, if it be not attended to. And how silent the room is!

Ha! what is that?

The upraised hand has let the miniature fall, and the hand itself has fallen like a lump of lead, with a dull, heavy thump on the arm of the chair; and a change—the change of death

—has come over the likeness in the mirror; and Emily is kneeling, with a lifeless form in her embrace.

Let us be thankful. She will think of him tenderly, lovingly, even reverentially; for all her innumerable acts of filial devotion and of self-sacrifice to him shall in after years show forth to her as virtues in him.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SAD NEWS.

In accordance with Lady Crayford's advice and his own inclinations, Everitt, on leaving Wolton Hall, slept only one night in London, and then proceeded, without even visiting his chambers, to Devonshire. A fortnight spent with his father gave the lame arm time to recover all its proper strength, and enabled Everitt to study that fine old sire of his more closely, and perhaps more affectionately than ever he had done before.

The father and son had always lived on the most desirable terms, as these pages have already made manifest; but of late years—ever since he had been fairly established in manhood—Everitt's admiration for the captain had regularly increased. Perhaps the latter, when his son ceased to be a boy needing, as the best boys do, wise paternal control, threw aside something of restraint and severity of manner; and perhaps the son at the same crisis began to read character more accurately and thoughtfully, to have a higher esteem for simplicity and moral dignity, and less admiration for brilliance and ingenuity.

"But all the same for that, you shall not be longer with me now," rejoined the captain, when Everitt, with graceful frankness, had been telling him a portion of his devotion to him, "though it delights me to have you displaying such love of me. If you remain down in this out-of-the-way vil-

lage, how shall Princess Frances hear of you? She will surely think that you are chained here by the fascinations of a country lass, and not by a gouty old man. So be off to London with you; and, to prevent your charging yourself with cruelty to me in doing so, let me tell you that your desertion of me won't make me unhappy. The time was—I am free to own it—when I was jealous of every thing that came in your way, of every place you went to, and every pleasure you had. When you were only six years old, and I gave you your first pony, I recollect how grudgingly in my heart I made the gift, for fear you'd care for the gift more than the giver. Then, when we packed you off to school—oh dear me!—don't you recollect how I would persist in coming to see you? and I dare say you never suspected that I dropped down upon you not so much out of simple love as out of anxious fear that you might not look sufficiently pleased at seeing me. And so it was the whole way up, when you went to Cambridge, and afterward, only in a less degree, when you settled in London."

"Yet you allowed me plenty of liberty."

"But I grudged it you," returned the old man, sternly, as he passed stern judgment on himself. "Very likely I acted pretty well, but that doesn't matter: the sin was at my heart all the same."

So Everitt, when the full fortnight had been completed in his father's cottage, went up to town, without pleading the necessity of keeping term; and for some time after his reinstallment in the Temple he was busily enough employed in looking up his friends, making his bow in the drawing-rooms of those ladies who were in the habit of favoring him with cards to their parties (especially, it is to be suspected, those ladies who were intimate visitors at Mrs. Leatheby's house), and calling around him those old associates whom "the Punch Bowl" numbered as its own.

On the whole, the first month after his return was a happy

one with him. In the clubs, the men of his acquaintance were so hearty in their greetings, and so unquestionably glad at again beholding him, and in the streets, in the theatres, and in all his old haunts he met with joyful recognitions from all who knew him, whether they were his equals, or above him, or beneath him.

Mrs. Leatheby and Frances were in London, and he was not only graciously received by both ladies when he called upon them, but was also honored with several invitations to visit them at their house or to accompany them elsewhere; but Frances, with her usual adroitness in managing others, made him understand that in public, and indeed in the presence of *any* third person, he should never approach her with any other manner than would become a slight acquaintance, and this order she contrived to convey without having recourse to words.

At first Everitt chafed under this severe treatment of his gentle one; but then it did not rest with him to elect how he was to be dealt with, for, as a beggar, he had to partake in the common fate of beggars. Still, when he got used to the restraint put upon him, or, as he magnificently termed it, the *deception* he was compelled to practice, he did not dislike the arrangement, for it protected him from the risk of again falling into the spasmodic ecstacies of passion which, twelve months before, had caused him to be guilty of so many extravagances of thought and action.

His love now became calmer, more placid, though at the same time deeper; it did not fret him to continual restlessness, but inspired him to plan undertakings that should render and prove him worthy of the prize he sought. Even in the busy and gay *season*, his student habits returned to him, and every day he spent hours in reading.

Lord Brigden was in town, but did not come much in Everitt's way. Frequently his name appeared in the daily papers at the head of brief, but judicious and *telling* speeches

in the Lower House; and every now and then Everitt met him in the Park and the club-district, but always under circumstances that precluded their indulging in a long greeting. Occasionally, too, his lordship encountered Everitt when the latter was with Mrs. Leatheby and Frances; and each time this happened, it appeared to Everitt that Lord Brigden's manner was very distant to those ladies, from which, and a few trivial circumstances which it is not requisite here to enumerate, our young friend was induced to suspect that his lordship had an especial and a most delicate reason for wishing to avoid Frances, and all who reminded him of his intimacy with her.

Perhaps Everitt would have materially altered his opinions on this subject if he had seen a correspondence that was being carried on at that very same period between Lord Brigden and Frances, and of which the following note reached its destination through the General Post-office on the first of May:

"DEAR FRANCES,—I have been thinking over all you said to me yesterday, and am delighted that you take so just a view of this matter. As you allow, the blow must be struck; then why defer it? It would pain you to thrust the knife into him; let me perform the operation for you—that is to say, if you think it necessary to make to the boy an especial announcement of your determination. For my part, I can not see why he should not be satisfied with receiving the intelligence, as the rest of the world will, by common rumor; but, as to this, you must decide, and *on your judgment I place perfect reliance.* Affectionately yours,

"BRIGDEN."

"In that I believe him; and 'tis something," said Frances to herself, with a ray of pleasure lighting her features, "to have such a man deliberately admit your intellectual power.

Oh, we shall get on very well. But, I must confess, I am perplexed as to how I can best put an end to the folly I have too long persisted in."

She was at her writing-table in the pretty boudoir we have often entered when she uttered these words.

It was morning, and the sunny light of the cheerful May day streamed through the windows upon the Sevres china, and buhl, and paintings, and it is not too much to say that, from east to west, the sun of that bright day shone on no fairer creature than the occupant of that apartment, as she tapped Lord Brigden's folded note on the table, and prepared to think out her perplexity. How should the *folly* be put an end to?

She was still on this point when the door opened, and her maid entered with another letter.

"It is from Everitt," she quietly observed, when her maid had left the room. "What can he be troubling me for?"

The answer to this question she soon obtained by tearing the envelope and reading,

"My dear Frances,—You will be very sorry to hear what I have to tell you. This morning a telegraphic message has informed me of the alarming illness of my father; I am sadly afraid that he is worse than the words of the sentence telegraphed would imply. In a quarter of an hour I shall be on my way to see him, by the express train. God bless you! Everitt."

"It could not have happened better," remarked Frances, with an air of relief; "now I shall at least have a fortnight or three weeks free from this embarrassment."

With this expression of satisfaction on her lips, she selected a sheet of note-paper from the writing materials before her, and having written on it, "See with what confidence I treat you," inclosed it, together with Everitt's letter, in an

envelope which she directed, and without delay sent to Lord Brigden.

In the mean time Everitt was being rapidly carried down to the west end of England. Never did journey seem so tedious to him as that transit from London to Devonshire, at the rate of fifty miles an hour. At length, however, the last station was arrived at, and, springing across the platform through a crowd of friends greeting and friends departing, jammed into a tight mass with stolid porters and blue-coated officials, Everitt was running to the nearest hotel to obtain a horse on which to proceed across the country, when a voice shouting out his name arrested his attention.

"Ha! Colonel Fossett."

"Stop, boy, for an instant," exclaimed the gallant old officer, jumping to the ground from his charger; "I know what you are after; jump on my horse and be off, without a word."

Accepting the friendly offer by action and not words, Everitt was instantly in the saddle.

"And, by ——!" said the veteran, with emotion, as his horse disappeared at full gallop, "he'll have to ride for it, or Dr. Grantham is mistaken."

And ride he did. As he passed, children and women ran frightened to the hedges, and carriages pulled out of the way, leaving the course clear for him; and ever and again he dashed by some who knew him, and wished him good speed, for the old captain's sudden illness had already been noised throughout the country, and every where it was regarded as a public calamity.

But Dr. Grantham was not mistaken; and all the speed of Colonel Fossett's horse was insufficient to bring Everitt to his father's bedside in time to see him before he died. The drawn blinds of the house were an ample announcement to Everitt that all was over as he dismounted at the garden gate and staggered to the door; he wanted no further assur-

ances that the terrible fact had occurred from the captain's old servant who came out to meet him with tears in his eyes.

He hastened to the awful chamber, and once only did he leave that dark and solemn room till another day dawned; and on that one occasion, he quitted the apartment for the purpose of writing one line to her who was the centre of all his noble and earnest affections.

"DEAR FRANCES,—My father is dead. EVERITT."

He penned no other word, save those of the direction; and then, when he had caused the note to be posted, returned to his place by his father's side, there to remain throughout the night.

It was morning—bright, and clear, and balmy—and Frances Leatheby again was engaged with the labors of correspondence in her room when this brief missive from Devonshire was put into her hand. There was no need for it to be longer; the simple announcement was all-sufficient, for Frances's imagination was lively and powerful enough to fill up the rest of the picture.

A convulsive expression of agony seized her face, and, clasping her forehead with her hands, she uttered a sigh deep as her sadness—deep as the sorrow which years hence shall be her daily companion. Soon, however, she was calm; the writhing lips returned to their customary expression, save that they were more compressed than usual, and the deadly paleness left her cheek.

"Strike now, then, while the nerves are numb from the blow he has already received. At least, I will have courage to be merciful," she said, composedly. "It matters not to me that he, in all probability, will not rightly judge my conduct—in some respects he can not think too severely of me—for this once, for the first time, I will only think of what is for his good."

While she was still speaking, she dipped a pen in the ink, and commenced writing the following extraordinary reply to Everitt's note.

"My dear Mr. Brookbank,—Mamma and I are much concerned to hear of the severe loss you have sustained in the death of your father. At the present moment, when your affliction has been with you so short a time, I will not presume to offer you any consolation except that which may be conveyed in the assurance of my sympathy with you in your sorrow.

"To pass from the subject of your grief to that of my happiness will not, I trust, seem to you unfeeling; for I can not forbear from informing you of an event that you will doubtless feel interested in, and which circumstances have not allowed me to communicate to you sooner. *The* event is nothing less than my engagement to Lord Brigden. He has long honored me with his especial preference, and I need not tell you that to be loved by such a man—brave, talented, and *virtuous*—is to me no subject of ordinary congratulation. Mamma is enraptured with the prospect before me. I do beg of you, as soon as you have recovered from the shock your feelings have sustained, to write me your good wishes, and a promise that you will be present at my wedding, which will probably take place before the summer is over.

"With our united kind regards and *very best* wishes, do believe me, my dear Mr. Brookbank, yours very sincerely,

"Frances Leatheby."

When she had written this letter, re-read it in a low monotone, sealed it, and directed it, she rose and rang the bell. The summons was speedily answered by her maid, to whom she delivered the note, with orders that it should be posted.

"Certainly, miss," said the woman, lingering.

"Why do you stop, Emma?" inquired Frances, kindly.

"You don't look well, miss. You're pale, and there is a wild look in your eyes. Would you not wish me to stay with you?"

"No, I thank you, I had rather be alone; but you are a good girl for being so careful of me."

Not at all astonished at her mistress's gentle manner, for it was habitually so, Emma left the room, and Frances once more was by herself.

"It is done; *and now he will abhor me forever.*"

She said these words after she had crossed the room, and as she uttered them she sank down upon a sofa, weeping and sobbing convulsively.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE PITY OF IT.

THE last occasion of our having any especial intercourse with the family of the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough was in last autumn, when, loitering in the shady walks of the grounds of Copley Rectory, and skulking about behind the hedges of the adjacent country, we witnessed more of the proceedings of that household than any member of it imagined. Let us return to that time, and from it proceed with the history of Isabel.

Is it to be wondered at that, when the knowledge of her cousin's passion had been imparted to her, it was continually present to her mind, and soon became the one engrossing topic for meditation? and admiring Hugh Falcon, as she was ever ready to admit she did, and loving him, as even she was not aware she did, is it strange that her thoughts unceasingly dwelt on him and her relation to him—on what they might have been, and what they might yet be?

For years she had felt with resigned sadness that in marriage she had not been wedded; and now, when she had

trained herself to cheerful contentment with her lonely lot, she had found the man to whom she was really united. The man so gifted in mind, so manly in disposition, so generous and so gentle, who had for years cherished the secret of his attachment to her—what a cruel fate was that which kept her from his arms!

At first, when the nature of her own feelings, as well as his, was seen by her, she trembled with fear, as well she might; unlawful love necessarily makes a young heart shudder, even at the time that it causes it to beat with gladness; and she had another reason, the magnitude of which she was unable to measure, for being afraid. But with the novelty of the discovery, the alarm which it created subsided; and soon, without one uneasy sensation, she surrendered herself to the delight of being beloved, and the greater delight of loving.

Her mind was so pure, and so subtle was her temptation, that she imagined herself capable of cherishing the strongest affection for Hugh, and, at the same time, of remaining the dutiful and tender wife. To her husband, she would be all that she had ever been—not one tittle less; still she would also allow herself to regard Hugh, as he had long regarded her, as one to whom she might have been "the all in all" of life, and *with* whom she might have been so much more to all creation.

So she was determined; but ever, when she pondered on "the what might have been," the dangerous, treacherous "what might yet be" presented itself to her mind.

It is hard to be reflective and never prospective; to regret and never to hope. The Reverend Harrie Dillingborough was an old man, past threescore years and ten; his limbs trembled, and were stiff in the morning when he first commenced his exercise; the furrows of time were fast deepening in his face; his hair was white, his brain daily lost something of its energy and briskness: when the harvest was

ripe, the husbandman cut it down and gathered it into the barn.

And *she*—when she looked into a mirror, she saw the bloom of life was in her fresh cheek, and the spirit of life rested on her vermilion lips. Hugh, too, was young. What, then, might not be? Oh, the pity of it! the pity of it! for from such mustard-seeds of thought as these sprung those murders and direst crimes we read of with horror.

Before we censure Isabel severely, let us reflect what love is to women—how much more it is to them than to men. To two thirds of them, and to all of that class to which Isabel belongs, the one noble vocation is to seek out a fit object, and to expend their affection upon it. Men have innumerable interests in the world—ambition of wealth, pursuit of power, study, philosophy, art; and, as circumstances enable them, they may rove from one of these many mistresses to another—often their very fickleness being applauded as the versatility of genius; but women usually have no second selection. Heaven guide them in making their only one!

And now, the sacrifice having been offered to *charity*, let us proceed to peck away at Isabel. But, sour as the sourest of us may be, we shall not find heart to pour upon her that scalding and prophetic condemnation which, in righteous indignation, we dispense to those enemies on whom we are unable to take vengeance.

At Copley, Hugh lingered day after day, week after week; and he did not take leave of that charming place till the leaves had fallen from the trees, and cold winds were whining over the drenched lands. Then, at last, he went up to town, but only to stay a few weeks, during the printing of his novel—*the novel* which he had read to Isabel—and while he was making new arrangements with his publishers.

Short, however, as this sojourn in London was, it was long enough for his almost innumerable friends to drag him into society, and the dissipation from which he had torn himself,

with a great effort, some months before. Christmas-day he spent at Brandon, according to express promise extracted from him by the Rev. Harrie Dillingborough; and, as he saluted Isabel on this return to her, her quick eye discerned the old pallor and haggard expression in his face, and she rightly construed them as signs that, immediately on leaving her and her home, he had resumed his former habits—of late hours and unceasing excitement. Yet she could not blame him for his folly; she was on the point of charging him with his error, and rebuking him for his want of firmness, when she was checked by the sad reflection of how little there was for him to enjoy in life except that wild pleasure.

Mrs. Grundy and her numerous and highly respectable circle were, of course, alive to "all these goings on," and were not inactive in the making of suggestions, insinuations, comparisons, inquiries, retrospections, and prophecies. What could a man of the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough's years mean by allowing a handsome young man, brilliant, "quite the fashion with the best in London," to stay for weeks together in his house? Had he no sense of his position as a dignified clergyman and an ancient husband? What was Captain Potter doing all this time? *He*, bless you! knew what was going on; *he* wasn't ignorant that Hugh Falcon was his daughter's first love; *he* remembered well enough how she had clung to his knees, and weeping—ay, poor child, weeping her very eyes out—implored him not to tie her up to a man old enough to be her great-grandfather. Why didn't *he* (the third personal pronoun was pronounced with an intensely bitter and sarcastic emphasis) put Mr. Dillingborough on his guard? And having, in thus speaking, commiserated to a certain extent the position of "poor Isabel," these amiable censors turned sharp round, and proceeded to treat the subject in quite an opposite manner.

And for Mrs. Dillingborough!—the *Honorable Mistress Dillingborough*, forsooth!—had she no trace of feminine deli-

cacy, of common propriety, left in her nature? Her eyes were wide enough open when she married; she knew what she gave up and *what she gained* by the step. And now, after having gratified her vanity by getting a place among the aristocracy of England, she was defying the world, and insulting all virtuous people by the levity and abandonment of her conduct.

Mrs. Pringle, at the head of the Witherstone select, observed at her second autumn tea-party that it was her fixed opinion that Mrs. Dillingborough ought *to be repudiated*—yes, nothing less than repudiated—by the women of England. Mrs. Pringle also stated that at one time much intimacy had subsisted between Mrs. Dillingborough and herself, but all intercourse had long ceased to exist; and, added Mrs. Pringle, with a stern wave of her head, to renew that intercourse, no power, no influence in heaven or earth should induce her. The next day, however, Dr. Pringle having been called in to prescribe for one of the servants at the Rectory, and to commence active operations against Captain Potter's gout, that worthy physician again insisted on his lady recanting her sentiments, which tended to place in an unfavorable light the daughter of an officer who had shed his blood in the service of his country, and had been mentioned honorably in Wellington's dispatches, and were unfair toward the mistress of a very intelligent maid-servant, suffering under an affection that was vulgarly known as "the housemaid's knee."

But Mrs. Pringle's change of views, though it pleased her husband, did not much affect the public feeling of Witherstone. Isabel's imprudence still remained the favorite subject of gossip in every shop by day, and every club-room by night, throughout the little town. The revolutionary exciseman came out with great spirit on the occasion, repeating conversations between Isabel and Hugh that had never taken place, and giving detailed accounts of "scenes" that no one had witnessed. And wherever and however the two cousins

spent their days, there were watchful eyes and listening ears near them. If they idled away the hours in the garden, as we have often seen them, the eyes and the ears were doing duty behind fences; and if they drove in the pony phaeton through the neighborhood, spies sprung up from secret nooks in banks and hedges to mark their conduct as they passed.

At Brandon it was the same. In the colder seasons of the year it was Isabel's habit to take horse exercise, and as (through Captain Dillingborough's considerate politeness) there was always a horse for Hugh, she was, as a matter of course, accompanied by her cousin. It was true that a groom always rode out at a respectful distance behind the equestrians, and that usually the canon himself met them in the carriage on their return; but these facts did not at all remove, in the sight of the self-elected judges, the impropriety of the culprits' conduct.

What a stir there was among the mischievous! The dean's daughters, and all the ladies of the Close set, and rather a dusty set of ladies it was, good-naturedly agreed to think no harm—certainly to *say* none—of their dear Isabel, but wisely determined each to herself to bide their time with open eyes, and when the time came for turning on their "dear friend," to repay themselves for their past forbearance. But the ladies who had no tie of acquaintanceship with Mrs. Dillingborough, and had no motive for keeping a guard on their words, did not hesitate to declare their sentiments.

Strange, in that bustling, active little city, Isabel was scarcely at all known (not more than forty, at the utmost, of the entire population had ever been spoken to by her); and what little evidence the community had of her nature existed in her beauty, her regular attendance at the Cathedral service, her many acts of charity, and her gentle ways and winning voice, displayed even to tradesmen in their shops; and yet there was scarce a tongue among those forty thou-

sand busily clacking ones to speak a good word for her. The men were tolerably well disposed to her because of her good looks; but they thought their sagacity was elevated in the eyes of others by winking, and hinting, and muttering that "all was not gold that glittered." So the scandal grew and grew.

In the afternoon, as Hugh and Isabel rode down the Brandon Fore Street, the passers-by gathered into little knots to discuss them; the rival editors of the rival papers, laying aside all religious and political differences, left their opposite offices, and interchanged mysterious sentences of a professional nature, in which the words "gentlemen of the long robe" played an important part; and the men of business, from the merchants down to the butchers' and bakers' boys, imitated those great captains of the local press; so did the ladies who were picking about the Fore Street, hopping, and strutting, and chaffering like mischievous ravens—ladies who liked excitement—ladies in town from the country for the day, and wanting to learn *all* the town news—ladies of importance, who had always regarded *that* Mrs. Harrie Dillingborough as "an impertinent adventuress," and ladies of no importance at all, who could not forgive Isabel for being, as they termed it, "no better than themselves."

And all these idling and gaping wonderers combined to say it was passing strange that neither the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough, nor even Captain Dillingborough, seemed to be aware what was going on.

Perhaps some readers may be inclined to question whether Captain Dillingborough was altogether ignorant of "what was going on;" and to some it may be only a matter of opinion whether the blindness of the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough himself was so complete as his neighbors supposed. Certainly, the old man about this time contracted a peculiar habit of watching Isabel askance without attracting her attention, and without appearing, to careless be-

holders, to observe her; and over his conduct to her, both as regards the little politenesses he was in the habit of offering her, and the conversation he held with her, a strange and subtle change came. On one occasion, upon quietly entering Isabel's drawing-room, he found her alone, upon the sofa, fast asleep. Very softly he approached her, and when he had come near to her face, he gazed into it, earnestly, suspiciously, angrily; but the quiet lids of the sleeper did not move even a nerve's thrill, and her breathing was as easy as that of childhood. Going a few paces from her, he stood still, watching her.

"Ah! she is very tired! she was up late last night, and to-day has had too long *a ride*," he muttered, as if trying to soothe a cruel thought to rest, but ineffectually, for at the word "*ride*" the suspicious and angry expression instantly returned to his face, and crossing the room stealthily, holding his breath, and proceeding with so slight a tread a pin's fall might have been heard, he penetrated to the inner drawing-room, examined its arrangements narrowly, and saw that its door was fast, and *locked*. Yes, it was locked—always was—with no key left in it. There was relief in this. Suspicion and indignant passion calmed down, and then gave way to self-reproach for having supposed himself basely tricked.

Sitting on a lounge not five feet from Isabel, he kept guard over her for many minutes, till some cinders fell with a grating noise from the fire, upon which she opened her eyes, not with a start, but awaking tranquilly.

"What are you thinking of?" she asked, with a smile, raising herself up slightly on the sofa. "You look sad: does it make you so to see me at rest?"

"I was thinking that you were very beautiful, Isabel; that you grow more and more so every year."

"And that all? Nay, that was not all?"

"Your sleep—so peaceful—brought to my mind the picture of another sleep quite as peaceable and more solemn; and I

went on to wonder how long it might be ere I should sink into it—"

Isabel rose and drew near to him, and gently took his hand.

"And," continued he, "why it is I have not already fallen into it."

"Hush! hush! have you not been happy in me, that you wish your life had been shorter?"

"Too happy! my darling, far too much so!"

"Then be cheerful and grateful."

"My happiness, Isabel, has made me selfish. But was I not that before?"

"At least, not to me."

"What! was I not selfish in marrying you?" he rejoined, playfully; but the tears were in his eyes, so strangely did his humor appear to be compounded of mirth and sorrow. "You, with beauty that has not even yet reached perfection, so young, so sure of finding admirers—what right had I to chain you up to my failing, withering self? Was that not selfish of me? Have you never fancied how much happier a younger husband would have made you? Say, now, you blushing, angry girl, if I died, would you not marry again? I laughed the other day to Frederick, as you and our cousin Hugh were riding before us, and said that it was possible you might be Mrs. Falcon before many years."

"Dear, dear, do not."

But it was beyond Isabel's power of nerve to stop this banter; and her words were borne down by the stronger current of her husband's.

"Now say—of course, its only a supposition—say I died at the end of this year, and you found yourself your own mistress, with twenty or thirty thousand pounds, and before I had been buried three months, some such man as the Colonel Wendvoer whom you admired so much last season were to make you an offer—"

"My dear husband, do bring this sport to an end; it is rough, unpolished, not such as your wife ought to take part in. Let me leave you."

Either the reproof itself, or the voice and unusually commanding manner of its delivery struck home; for the old man immediately desisted from his raillery, and, opening the door for Isabel as she retired, made an apology for the clumsiness of his jocularity.

Strange to say, this interview made no lasting impression on Isabel, for the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough was prone to untimely jests, and she was continually receiving fillips and stinging blows from him, of which, to do him justice, he was altogether unconscious. So, ignorant alike of the gossip out of doors, and of any suspicions that might be harbored against her within, Isabel continued on her course, unaware that an enemy was plotting to force her to do that which she would have shuddered at imagining.

Very regular she was at the morning service in the Cathedral; perhaps more so than she had ever been since her marriage. The weather was very cold and winterly; but she was always up and warmly dressed, and, as the "quick bell" rang in after the chimes, was to be seen every morning crossing "the Close," and entering the great door of the Cathedral. When it was fine—that is, when it did not rain—she was accompanied by her child; but usually she was alone, the weather being too inclement for little Harrie.

It was a magnificent temple—even for England, abounding in noble Cathedrals—the marble pillars supporting Norman arches, and so fencing and covering the sombre aisles that, to one standing in the centre of the building, it seemed as if he stood where met together many avenues of lofty trees; and when the organ pealed, and the voices mingled with its deep tones, it was as if God were moving in the primeval forest, and awfully speaking, as he spoke to our first parents.

Not many people attended those morning services; the

clergy whose turn it was to officiate, the humbler officials of the Cathedral, some twenty ladies from the entire city, a few children, and a string of poor recipients of chapter alms, constituting the usual congregation.

The Dissenters of Brandon laughed at the meagreness of the gatherings, and argued from them that the Church had lost all influence over the country, not caring, before they arrived at that conclusion, to follow those *few* who *did* continually come together to their homes and into the world, and discover what effect they produced upon others.

It was altogether of her own will that Isabel was one of the small number who regularly assembled at the service. The servants of her house were not required to attend; Captain Frederick Dillingborough (when with his family) and Hugh rarely entered the Cathedral—never at so early an hour as eight of the morning; and the canon himself never visited it oftener than his *duty* demanded, and was rather displeased than otherwise with Isabel's perseverance in leaving her warm bed and issuing forth through the foggy air to matins.

"It was imprudent of her—very imprudent; it was not well to lay too much stress on the forms of religion," contended the venerable man, resolving to leave forms alone, and allow the spirit to take care of itself.

But Isabel withstood all opposition to her pious habit. "Her health did not suffer from the morning air; and if it did, she would rather be ill in body than mind. She did not wish to force others to act like herself, but she must—indeed she must—for her own happiness, act as she did." And this she said with such warmth and vehemence of entreaty, that the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough was compelled to withdraw his objections, and vaguely to suspect that there did exist a religious sentiment which he, lost in the haze that long years of decorous worldliness had spread over his mind, could not appreciate.

One cold morning, as Isabel was leaving the Cathedral, her attention was arrested by the earnest gaze of a poor woman fixed upon her. Who this woman was Isabel did not know; but she had seen her for several days taking part in the service, and—at least so Isabel fancied—watching her with an expression of peculiar interest.

On this occasion, however, there was no doubt as to the nature of the look the poor woman gave Isabel; it was full of entreaty, not for alms, but recognition.

"You are a stranger to me, but I am glad to see you here," Isabel said, softly, pausing a few steps from the great door of the Cathedral, and allowing the scant congregation to disperse upon their ways.

"It is not my town, madam, or you would have seen me here before. I live in London, but just now I am on a visit here."

"Indeed! Do you often attend the week-day services there?"

"Almost daily, madam—now in one church, now in another—as I can find time and opportunity."

"Westminster Abbey is where I go when I am in London."

"I know it. I have seen you there often."

Isabel gave a movement of surprise.

"You'll pardon me, madam, but I have often watched you there, and it has made my heart light to see your gentle eyes turned up to Heaven; and once, when I had the luck to be near enough to you to hear the words of the prayers come like music from your lips, I felt as if I should have sunk with gladness; it made me feel that harm could never befall you, and that there were angels round you to bear the sounds of your lips to God. Oh! dear lady, now I look at you, I know you can never do wrong or think wrong, and my supplication to God shall be that you may be as happy as you are pure and angel-like."

"What harm do you fear for me?"

"I fear naught now, my dear lady—indeed I fear naught now; once I did, but I wronged you, and even sinned against the Lord in doing so," the woman replied, folding her cloak round her, and taking a few steps away from Isabel.

"Stay!" said Isabel; "tell me your name; let me know who you are."

"My name matters not, Mrs. Dillingborough," the woman answered, earnestly, still proceeding in a contrary direction to that which Isabel would have to take to reach home. "My name isn't I. You know me already, and you won't forget the poor woman who often enters into God's house with you, and loves you as a sister—for your own sake, and for the sake of others."

As she uttered these last words, the strange woman turned away and hastened from Isabel, who, wondering what the poor thing meant, perhaps pitying her as one slightly deranged, went on her homeward way, and was soon at her breakfast-table, with Hugh, and little Harrie, and her step-son for companions.

At the close of the afternoon of that same day on which Isabel had this extraordinary interview, Captain Frederick Dillingborough also was favored with a not less remarkable one with the same person, as he was returning, from a long walk, to dinner. It was in a quiet by-street leading from the commercial part of the city up to the Cathedral quarter that Frederick Dillingborough encountered the woman, who seemed startled and annoyed at the meeting.

"Ha! what brings you here?" he inquired, commencing the conversation, but without any evidence of surprise.

"You know me, then, it appears," replied the woman, turning pale, and biting her thin lips.

"What brought you here?"

"The wide world is the free gift of God, and the open country is as much a present to me as you. And for an-

swer to your question, you'll have none, you proud, bad man!- for you know, better than I can tell you, why I am here," was the indignant answer.

"You are dogging my steps again," said Frederick Dillingborough, quietly; "I have watched you for days past, hanging about my father's house, you gipsy; and this is not the first time you have pestered me."

He paused for an answer, but none was made.

"Now, mistress," continued he, "I'll bestow on you a few words of instruction and advice. In this city there is a jail, and if you are to be found hereabouts by to-morrow night, you shall be locked up in it as a vagabond; so take my advice and be off."

The woman laughed scornfully at this threat, and in such a manner that Frederick Dillingborough saw that she was aware how impotent he was to carry his menace into execution.

"I do not doubt your desire to get rid of me, for far less injuries than I have done to you, you have revenged ere this with murder; but your power here is not equal to your will. You dare not lay a hand on me to hurt me. You know little of me, save that you have seen me often, as a poor woman, in the streets of London; you can not say scarcely any thing for certain about me. You know by my conduct that I feel I have you in my power, but what secret it is concerning you I possess, which of your many villainies it is that I am acquainted with, you have not discovered—though perhaps you may soon learn. Now let me pass. But, mark me, Captain Dillingborough, your present wretched, infamous plot shall fail. In no piece of it shall God permit it to succeed."

Abashed, conquered, but still wearing a smile of placid amusement, Captain Dillingborough stood aside, and, as he was commanded, allowed the woman to pass.

"Nonsense! it can only be that she is some poor cracked

body," he observed to himself, as she disappeared and he again proceeded on his way. "Still, perhaps, it is as well that we are all going up to town at the end of the week."

That very night, a letter, ill written and badly spelt, was slipped into the box of the Brandon post-office, of which the following is an exact copy, that may, by chance, interest the readers of these memoirs, as the original was directed to Miss Nugent, Elm Cottage, Slaughton.

"dere mis,—this is too enform yu that the family leve this bi nex week, i know this for a fact sins the servens told me so. i saw her this morning, and evin was so bold as to speke with her. She is a swete angil, and i pray and do truss that God will pretec her. in sum things she put me so in mindd of you in yeres aggone. and i ol so saw him, and my anger berst out at him, witsch was wrong but i let out nothing so as to betray any thing. dere mis give my luv and a many kisses to Nancy and may God bless yu. yu will see me soon, but I kannot rite more now, for mi riten and spellen have lef me sins yu tort me as a gal in yeres aggone. luv and many kisses to Nancy. an dere mis i am

"your humbel affekshund servent

"MARGARET GARDINER."

CHAPTER XXX.

DISCOVERIES.

IN another week's time the Dillingboroughs were again established in town—the rector and Isabel in their Rectory-house in Westminster, and Captain Dillingborough in his club chambers, his place in the House of Commons, and his position in London society. To show his constituents (for whom, generally and severally, he entertained sentiments

of active hatred, because he was under obligations to them) that he was a man worthy of their confidence, the gallant officer prudently fired off, on various occasions, a few sententious remarks in the just mentioned assembly, taking care not to commit himself to any party whatever, and only saying enough to entitle him to the respectful notice of the newspaper reporters.

While Frederick Dillingborough was thus occupying himself in the Senate, his father's house was being visited by the old set of friends, and Isabel and the rector were again commencing the round of visits they were accustomed year after year to make between the close of January and the end of July. But in the hearts of each of these three there lay an interest the world did not wot of, and that would not suffer them to enjoy even transient repose.

Hugh, of course, quitted the family party on their return to town, and betook himself once more to his chambers in Gray's Inn, which, though good fires crackled in them as he entered them, bore to him a cold, comfortless, and inhospitable aspect. Fool that he was! what had he been doing for these months past? permitting himself to believe in a dream, and to waste the precious moments that might have been so profitably employed. And thus, quarreling with himself, he passed his first evening "at home" in solitude, and in a sufficiently savage frame of mind. Next morning, however, he was put in spirits by the receipt of a large check from his publisher, and an assurance that *the* novel was creating an unprecedented sensation; and this agreeable announcement was followed by the irruption of a friend, who carried him off from any chance of falling back into despondency, for a walk to the clubs.

But, though Hugh was away, Isabel did not think the less of him. Repeatedly she caught herself wondering when he would call; and when two or three days had passed without his making his appearance, a grief, as if she were neglected,

weighed upon her heart, and she more than once sat down in private to weep out her disappointment. And these fits of crying not only did not remove the weight, but also gave to her countenance visible signs of her dejection, that were not lost upon her husband when he next saw her. Yes, he saw the flushed eyelids, which the coldest water had been unable to restore to their usual whiteness, but he said nothing—nay, he did not allow her to see that he observed any thing remarkable in her appearance, contenting himself with regarding her with half-closed eyes, stealthily, and when her gaze was averted from him. At last Hugh called, glad as sunshine, to see his Isabel again, after the long absence of a week, and not the less glad because he found her alone, the rector having gone out in a conscientious fit, with the intent to pace pastorally up and down the best streets of his parish. Hugh staid long that morning with Isabel—more than an hour, indeed almost two hours—in her bright drawing-room, and when he took his leave he asked permission to call again very soon; and Isabel's heart leaped and sent bright hues to her face when she saw how much he desired to be always with her.

Scarcely had Hugh left the house when the rector returned from his walk, and, going straight to Isabel, found the flush of pleasure still upon her features, and the light of joy in her eyes.

"Cousin Hugh been here?" inquired the old man, sharply, for once letting slip his caution.

"Yes, that he has, and he has been delightful," replied Isabel, innocently. "But what made you ask the question?"

"I saw him in the street," answered the rector, telling a lie with a painful twinge of the heart, for the old man, if he was not a good Christian, was a gentleman.

"And did you not speak to him?"

"We only bowed," responded the rector, the blush mounting to his forehead.

"Then you were on opposite sides of the street?"

"Isabel," observed the rector, wishing to put an end to these questions, and save his conscience, "let us make those calls now; there will be time, and I see your carriage is at the door."

Of course Isabel was ready in compliance with this request, and, ere many minutes had elapsed, she was seated in the carriage, with her husband by her side. But during their drive they talked little, for the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough was in one of his silent fits, and, instead of exerting himself to amuse Isabel, sat back in his corner of the chariot, watching her in moody silence as she looked out on the tide of life that surged and rolled around her. It was the same when they reached home, after having made their calls: the rector would not be seduced into conversation. Was he thinking? or displeased? or only sleepy? Isabel asked of herself. They dined together without the presence of any third person; and in the rector's library they had their dessert, as he always liked to have it when they were alone; but, on this occasion, wine did not loosen his tongue; and so obstinately silent was he, that Isabel, disheartened by many failures, ceased from her attempts to lead him into conversation.

In the fitful firelight they sat—even as we have before seen them, only far less cheerfully—each thinking apart from the other, he on her, and she not altogether on him. Slowly the old clergyman drank down his red wine, yet with no signs of relish, but with apparent unconsciousness of his occupation, as we often go through our daily habits. At last he pushed the decanter from him, and composed himself in his easy-chair as if for sleep; whereupon Isabel rose, and brought him the silk kerchief from the drawer to throw over his head.

"Here, let me blind your eyes," she observed, with a laugh, throwing out the silk folds lightly.

"Would you object to my being blind, Bel?"

"How independent," she laughed, "I should be if you were! Only think of me, freed from the restraint of your observation!" And, as she uttered this, innocently as a child at play, she dropped the white veil down.

But the rector was unable to sleep, though he composed himself for it; and Isabel, having returned to her customary chair, sat with folded hands as motionless as marble. At least one hour passed through that narrow passage of the great time-glass which we call the present, and then, thinking her husband was in a quiet slumber, Isabel rose, and went softly to the door.

"Where are you going, dear?" asked the rector, with a start.

"Ah! are you awake? Only to the nursery to see our boy."

"I'll come too. May I?"

"Do; and you shall hear him say his evening prayers, only you shall remain in the day-nursery, and not let him know you are a listener, for he might be frightened," Isabel replied, with pleasure.

Assenting to this condition, the rector gave Isabel his hand, and was led up into the day-nursery; and, having deposited him there, Isabel passed on to the next apartment—little Harrie's sleeping-room—taking care, however, to leave the door open, so that the listener might hear his child's voice. Heaven bless the simple, devout heart of that mother! she and her boy were as two angels, so beautiful were they communing together, as she, the more developed in wisdom and goodness, explained to him the wondrous mercy and love of his Eternal Father.

Perhaps the spectacle was too much for the rector. Certain it is that for some reason or other he did not long remain at his post of observation, and that before Isabel returned into the day-nursery to look for him he crept noiselessly down stairs back again into the dark library.

Once more in the solitude of that grave room, he felt like something wicked—like a hypocrite expecting immediate detection, an unjust judge, a cowed robber.

He was startled by the sharp sound of the postman's rap at the door; and the entry of a servant, soon after the rap, with a letter, struck him with a kind of alarm. Candles were brought that he might see to read the letter, and their light strangely dazzled him, so unnerved was he by reflections that had rapidly passed through his mind.

It was a letter in a handwriting that was unknown to him, closely penned, and by a lady, as any eyes could see at a glance. The writer begged that the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough would call upon her without delay, and learn the particulars of certain intelligence she promised to afford him on a subject that was near his heart, and which he would do well to consider wisely and dispassionately. There was no ambiguity in the epistle; it spoke plainly of the matter it treated, and in clear language, of much that the reader imagined was known only to himself and to his eldest son. Such precision, and earnestness, and extraordinary acquaintance with the secret arrangements of the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough's domestic affairs did the letter display, that it was evident it was not to be treated with disregard. It concluded with another entreaty from the writer that he would come to her the very next day, without letting any of his household know where he was going, and especially without communicating with his son, Captain Frederick Dillingborough.

Lifting his eyes with astonishment from the paper after perusing it many times, he was astonished to find Isabel standing in the room, with her dark eyes looking into him.

"Do you know any thing of this?" exclaimed the rector, with a start.

"I? What is it?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing: I forgot," he responded, crum-

pling the paper up in his hand, and putting it into his breast pocket.

"My dear, you are ill; something troubles you."

And the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough acknowledged that he was troubled, and had been perplexed for some days past; it mattered not what the anxiety was, a few days would set it right one way or other, and then he should be at his ease again. Which confession having been made, he rose from his chair, and gently putting his arm round Isabel's small figure, he paced the room with her to and fro, speaking tenderly to her on many different topics, and giving her many signs of endearment in that best style, so full of urbane deference, and almost youthful grace, which he possessed at rare times till the very last, and which constituted a striking contrast to the customary tardy and somnolent demeanor of his languid and declining age.

The next day the rector spent away from home, and so he did several succeeding days, thereby causing little surprise to any member of his household, for it was his custom to maintain a certain mystery about his movements, and to absent himself from Isabel, without giving her any explicit notice of his intention. To Isabel, upon this occasion, the disappearance of her husband every morning for many hours was fruitful of results that neither she nor he anticipated.

She was alone—a thing that had not happened to her for months—and it requires no unusual amount of sagacity to say on what her thoughts rested during her solitude. Hugh was away; morning after morning she looked for him, but he did not come. At first she attributed neglect, indifference, carelessness to him; but, on second considerations, she saw that he was not in fault; that, much as he might desire to be always with her, it was impossible that he should be so; that doubtless he in his own heart was not less miserable than she at being withheld from the one valued companion. He might contrive to call upon her or see her once in a week or ten

days, but even that frequency of visiting her would in all probability attract the attention and censures of the world. It was by degrees that Isabel made this discovery, after many long passages of weeping, and after she had started, on several separate days, away from her likeness in mirrors which informed her of the downcast expression of her countenance, and the pallor of her own cheeks. And then, when the revelation was at last made to her, she clasped her hands over her face, and sank down in that agony of grief which men rarely experience. It was not shame that tortured her, for her pure mind was incapable of an imagination that could bring a blush to condemn it; it was no contrition, for, as regarded this one subject, she had not sinned—no, not in thought—against her husband; it was not regret, for she had enough to consider in the present and the future without dwelling on the past; it was affright that struck her down—overpowering affright at the horrors and dangers of her position. How was it that she had never seen them before? She had seen them, a voice whispered, and had trembled at them, but they, as subtle tempters ever can, had charmed away her fears with sweet songs learned from virtue, and wiles and smiles imitated from simplicity.

That day the rector did not return till night, having dined at a club after transacting his business, whatever that business was.

"Mrs. Dillingborough at home?" he inquired of a servant when he had entered the library.

"Yes, sir."

"Dined at home?"

The man replied that his mistress had not dined at all, and that he understood she had been unwell.

The answer was hardly out of his lips when Isabel herself entered, pale, but apparently cheerful.

"What has been the matter, Bel?" inquired the old man, anxiously and kindly, when the servant had withdrawn and closed the door.

"Nothing—only a headache."

"But where did the headache come from?"

"I can not say. Perhaps it is London air."

"It has never before disagreed with you."

"But it does now," answered Isabel, with an effort. "I am not well; my spirits are not so good as they ought to be, and I am not the cheerful companion to you that you require, and I must attribute it to this wretched atmosphere."

The rector looked at her very tenderly, with tears just rising in his eyes, and inquired, "What would you have?"

"Country air—more fresh country breezes. I can not bear this place; do take me down to Copley, and let us be there for some months, quite by ourselves. Dear husband, I beg you to grant my request."

Her manner was hurried and excited; if she had not been the most artless of women, she would not have preferred so small a petition with such vehemence and emotion.

"Wait for a few days, and then you shall take me where you will, my darling," the rector responded, gently, as he sat down, and Isabel took her old place on his knee; "just now I am occupied with some painful business which will soon be settled, and then we will go away together."

"Can you not tell me what the business is?"

"Not now, dear girl, but soon you shall know all. It has pained me very much, and for this reason, that I am afraid, Isabel, I have been treated with perfidy and indescribable baseness by one I have loved and trusted. It is bad enough for the young to be deceived; but when the old are wronged by those on whom they, in their declining years, have placed their affections, it is far more cruel; for, as Pitt said, 'confidence is a plant of slow growth in an aged breast;' and he might have added that it is a surpassingly sensitive one."

He spoke with such unaffected grief, with a voice so tremulous and yet so deep and manly, that Isabel, for the first time in her life, perceived how great and chivalric his nature

was; and as she listened, she drew closer to him, and clasped him tighter in her slight embrace, in sympathy and admiration.

Next morning Isabel rose with a less heavy heart—almost a cheerful one. Perhaps a healthy conscience was rewarding her for righteous resolutions; or perhaps Nature was mercifully inspiriting her for the ascent of that rugged and thistle-covered hill up which she had determined to toil. Again she spent the greater part of the day without the rector, for he once more departed on the business of trial and affliction; but the hours had not such leaden wings, and, though Isabel might not be positively happy, yet she was able to make little Harrie so, and to elicit roars of laughter from that young gentleman at the quaint stories she told him after he had said his lessons to her.

At the close of that day, as the afternoon was mingling with the dusk of the winter evening; as ladies were driving rapidly home from the Park to toast the cold from their nerves before going to dress for dinner; as gentlemen were cantering and trotting to their homes along muddy roads, over which the clammy fog hung; as clerks and other such slaves of commerce were congratulating themselves that their day's work was wearing to an end, and as the drudges of pleasure—actors of all degrees, waiters in brilliant mansions and noisy taverns, singers, musicians, dancers—were preparing themselves for their nightly toil, Hugh called at the Rectory. It was his knock: Isabel knew it from all the other harsh rattans that were every day beaten on her own and her neighbors' doors; and they were his quick steps on the staircase—to Isabel's ear they had a peculiar music. Strange how her heart sunk within her, and she looked round for an escape, so as to avoid him! Why, forty-eight hours before she was pining to be near him, would have found it a pleasure to see him from the window pass along, and have leaped with joy at the sound of his voice!

The room was dusky in the twilight as he entered, but another mist over Isabel's eyes made it still darker to her, and though she felt Hugh near to her side, for some seconds she was not able to see him. A moment more, and the giddiness left her, and she was looking at him, eye to eye—resolutely, but affectionately.

"You look much better than you did last time I was here—indeed, you seem almost well again, and yet there is something unusual in your appearance," said Hugh, taking his seat on the sofa by her side.

"Perhaps you will also be surprised at the news I have for you; we are soon going into the country again."

"Why?"

"Because I have asked my dear husband to take me down to Copley, and he has promised to accede to my request."

"Will you be away long?"

"I trust so—it is my wish to be there till we must go to Brandon; indeed, I should not grieve at being told that I am never again to behold London."

"And I—what am I to do, Isabel, in your absence?"

"Your duty, cousin Hugh, your duty, as I pray God I may have strength to do mine," she answered, firmly—as Hugh thought, reproachfully.

"Do you blame me for having neglected it?"

"No, dear Hugh—nor do I charge you with such a crime. You know I am not likely to err by judging you severely, and it is a great source of relief to me to feel that, especially in all that regards myself, you have acted the part of a considerate as well as of a generous nature. I see you are astonished at my demeanor; reflect a moment, and you can explain it."

There was a silence of a minute ere Hugh responded, and then he spoke only to ask another question.

"Have spies been upon us, Isabel, who have discovered our secret, and reported it to Mr. Dillingborough, falsely, and to him most offensively?"

"No one has made any discovery save myself, and I have made two: the first, my error; the second, the way how to amend it. Do not think I speak lightly on a matter serious to ourselves, and of itself solemn; my words are not idle ones, but they follow from reflection, therefore regard them well. It is true that a great injustice has been done to us—one cruel to you, and perhaps not less so to me; but the fact that it has pleased God to put trouble and calamity upon us does not free us from the obligation to do our duty to God and man to the utmost of our ability. For years, you remembered your duty to yourself, to me, to others, and to God, and, regardless of your own privation and suffering, you performed it. Let me follow your example."

"Heaven knows, dear Isabel, you have."

"I have not done my duty, for in allowing my thoughts to rest so much on you, I have failed to reserve that self-command which is requisite to enable me to be all that I most solemnly engaged—and most earnestly have striven—to be to the good man whose wedded wife I am."

"Dear, dear Isabel, you wrong yourself."

"*You* wrong *me* in endeavoring to persuade me so," she retorted, angrily. And then she proceeded more calmly, "I have confessed my error; now for my amendment—if possible, my atonement. Hugh, you must leave me instantly, and never again see me."

"Never! You can not mean it."

"Forbear! Do not contend with a woman—with the woman you love, and who, more dearly than she does her own babe, loves you. Do not battle with me, and at such a moment. In the name of generosity—in the name of common humanity, forbear!"

"My darling!" Hugh returned, softly, "I will think for you, and, if you will let me, act too; but, for *my* sake, remember what is for your own interest, your lasting happiness. How will you account to Mr. Dillingborough for my *sudden* cessation from visiting here?"

"By telling him the truth," she answered. "As soon as he shall be at liberty this night to speak with me, I will go to him, confident that I shall meet from him with nothing but kindness, and, from the beginning to the end, I will recount to him the sad history of our affections, and will unfold to him the only secret I ever had from him since my life was made one with his. It will be a great trial to me to tell that story; but the Father of Truth will help me, and so it shall be told."

"It is told already!" an agitated voice said behind her.

At the sound of those deep tones, Isabel sprang to her feet, and, with a cry of agony, sank down, clasping the knees of her husband, who had entered the room unobserved, accompanied by Kate Nugent, who stood, almost invisible to the bewildered Hugh, a few paces behind the rector.

Yes, there he stood, his fine old figure bending down to her who knelt at his feet, his white head bowing to the ground, and sobs checking his utterance, as he said, "May God pardon my wretched selfishness, even, Isabel, as thou hast forgiven it!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

How he left the house Hugh did not know; whether he stumbled down the stairs and through the door, whether he was turned out, whether he attempted to stammer forth some apology and explanation to the rector, he could not remember, so completely had the blow that he had received bewildered and stunned him.

He was in the streets, but what hour it was he was not sure; it could not, however, be late, for all the shops were open, and the thoroughfares were brilliant with the lighted windows of tradesmen, as well as with the gas-lamps. The

streets were crowded, and the noise of multitudes was in Hugh's ears, yet the streams of passengers had to him an air of ghostly unreality, and their hum resembled to him rather the dull beating and swaying of mighty waters than any human sound. Had he been in the open air for long? for minutes, or for hours? And Isabel, and the rector, and Kate Nugent, had he truly seen them standing together, locked in one embrace? or was he only in a fever, with his brain troubled with its own wild creations?

He continued to pace up and down the flags that lay along just such a street as he had made acquaintance with in a dream, and under the dark walls of just such a magnificent cathedral, abbey, or church, as he had frequently admired in dreams and like phantasmagoria; all kinds of human creatures—some halt and distorted, some erect and manly, some in mendicant rags, some flaunting in finery—flitted past him, bowing, and beckoning, and gesticulating to each other, and congregating in greatest crowds round the doors of brilliant palaces of glass and flame, out of which there issued, every few minutes, men and women, and even children, with unsteady gait and glistening eyes, who passed on beneath the old Cathedral. Why he persevered in moving up and down those twenty yards of pavement, he could not say; if he had made an appointment to meet any one there, the circumstance had vanished from his mind.

"Hugh Falcon, you have acted a coward's part—a mean, selfish, unmanly part," a voice said to him by his side, causing him to start suddenly round as if a bullet had struck him, and he made one painful struggle to avoid Death, whose arms were already round him.

The speaker was a slightly-built woman, dressed in black, whose thick veil was drawn away from her pale, thin face, so that one could observe the anger and decision expressed in her countenance.

"Have you left her, then? does she forgive me?" he

replied. "In the name of mercy, say that she forgives me."

"Still the same—still, even now, when your soul ought to be wrenched with death-agony, craving for solace to your own miserable feelings! What if she forgives you the cruel wrong that you have done her—the cruel insult you have cast on her? does her doing so lessen your crime, or make your nature less contemptible? Say that she does not see you in your true light—does that alter the fact that you were willing to sacrifice her honor, her peace of mind, her everlasting happiness, to the gratification of your wretched affectation of love, your vanity, or yet more unworthy appetites? Hugh Falcon, I have been deceived in you; for, though I have always pitied you for your moral instability, and known you as a poor flutterer, ready to pay for the applause of fashionable people by the degradation of your mind and the dissipation of your health, I imagined that beneath your absurd littleness and your lamentable vices there lay a warm, courageous, chivalric heart. You need not tell me of your struggles and sufferings: I know your past history well. Once it aroused my sympathy; now it only enables me to despise you; for, even with such teaching, you have not learned to sacrifice yourself—no, not in one particular. Oh, Hugh Falcon! you might have spared her—*you* knew what it was to cherish an affection that could not be honorably gratified—*you* had been taught how hard it was to live *in solitude* with an unresting heart—could *you* not have protected *her* from the far harder lot of loving one and *being chained up to another?* Does she forgive you? Ay, that she does. Ere I left her, I heard her, on her knees, pray that, as she forgave all her enemies, so she might be forgiven."

"Do not—do not—I implore you—"

But, before he could state his entreaty, she to whom he was about to prefer it passed on into the crowd, and he dared not follow her. Like a guilty thing, steeped in shame, be-

numbed with sin, degraded beyond the power of repentance, he crept away up a silent passage that led from the thoroughfare to the great door of the Cathedral, and when he had reached the termination of that short, dark passage, he crouched down on the steps of the entrance to the sacred place. How many poor, wretched outcasts, from times of which that building is our best history down to the present, have done the like!

Lost to Hugh's gaze, the lady who had addressed him proceeded on her way, speedily and without hesitation, the rapidity and decision of her progress showing that she was familiar with the quarter of London she was in. Straight up the great thoroughfare she went, then across a square in which a famous column stands, through files of cabs and knots of brawling drivers, past a royal statue, under the covering of a colonnade, nigh the doors of clubs, round which hung cosy broughams, till she reached a pile of club-chambers in a quiet street not half a mile from St. James's Palace. In the vestibule of this establishment, seated in a stuffed chair, hooded at the top, and suggesting the idea of a polite watchman's box, was a very plethoric Cerberus, with a powdered head and a striking livery.

Jumping forth with a "*cave-canem*" ferocious aspect, this official pounced upon the lady, and briefly demanded "Where to?"

"Captain Dillingborough's."

The porter coughed, looked grave, scanned the lady's quiet face, became confused, and finally remarked, "Captain Dillingborough lives on the first floor, ma'am."

"Thank you," and with a bow the lady passed on up a magnificent flight of stone stairs.

Having arrived at the summit of this flight, she proceeded down a long passage, well lighted, past many doors, on which were names inscribed, till she came to one bearing the name she sought.

"Is Captain Dillingborough at home?" she inquired of the valet, who answered her pull of the bell.

The man hesitated.

"Ah! I see he is; take in this card, and tell him I want to see him on very particular business."

The fact was that Captain Frederick Dillingborough, R.N., was in his rooms, and was also generally "at home;" that is to say, "at home" to any friendly brother officer, or co-senator, or other familiar who should step in for a quiet game of ecarté, to any Mademoiselle Hortense or Fifine, who was privileged to beat up the captain's quarters—in short, to any unobjectionable visitor; but the valet was at a loss what answer to give to the lady, for he had never seen her before, and he was unacquainted with the name upon the card. There were several things in favor of admitting her, and several reasons for excluding her. She was not young—that was against her, and any freshness of beauty she might once have possessed she had lost, which also was against her; but, on the other hand, she was not corpulent, a defect in the feminine figure Henri knew his master had a decided objection to, and there was a touch of fervor and imagination in her dark eyes worthy the notice of a connoisseur. Again, she did not look like a beggar, or a lady likely to smash the pier-glasses and kick up a row; she had not the bearing of an ordinary woman; and there was an air about her that said firmly, but unaggressively, that she did not intend to be turned away. Moreover, it might be that she would afford amusement to Captain Dillingborough, then an invalid, and requiring a little agreeable excitement.

So, taking the card in his hand, the man quitted the lobby or vestibule of the chambers, and entered a fine and well-appointed dining-room — such a one as a respectable family might know by the good old name of parlor; and, crossing this apartment, which was empty, but lighted by a lamp placed on the table, he knocked at another door, and, open-

ing it, displayed an elegant room, half study, half drawing-room, abounding in statuettes, paintings and good books, on a sofa in which reclined the lord of the establishment, habited in a rich dressing-gown. His couch was drawn near to the fire, and the lamp which illuminated the apartment being covered with a shade of semi-transparent and pink material, gave a delicate hue to his face, which was thinner than usual, owing to his slight indisposition.

"It's a deuced odd thing—don't know a Miss Nugent—still, let me see, Henri, how is she to look at?" observed Frederick Dillingborough, scanning the card.

"Well, sir, in that light I can't say she's much to speak about."

"Humph! Lord Harrie Hake promised he would try to look in upon me this evening; so perhaps you had better say —how old did you say she seems, by-the-by?"

"I should think, sir, over forty."

"Say I'm not at home to visitors—too ill—doctors say excitement, and all that kind of thing; now go."

But the lady was already in the room, having followed Henri and heard the above colloquy; and now advancing from the door, she perfectly changed the appearance of the game.

"That will do, Henri; you may leave us," said Frederick Dillingborough, rising and bending politely to his visitor; "allow me to place you this chair by the fire."

"Thank you; I will sit here. You do not remember me, it seems."

"I am ashamed to be obliged to confess, Miss Nugent, that at the present moment I can not recall your face out of the many I have been so fortunate as to behold."

He spoke the truth; but instinctively he felt that this Miss Nugent was about to constitute herself the heroine of a scene, and he forthwith prepared to oppose her with excessive politeness and insolence. As he resumed his seat, he smiled

with emphatic urbanity, and an air of the most fascinating defiance; a smile that said, "Indeed, I am glad to see you; I am accustomed to these difficulties, and, really, you must know, they quite interest me; indeed they do."

Not at all perturbed by his demeanor, but with as much composure as if she had been in her own dressing-room, Kate Nugent took off her bonnet and cap, and placed them on the table, and then let down her hair and brought it forward to the side of her face. With a placidity and self-command that astonished even Captain Dillingborough, and convinced him that his opponent, whoever she was, was no ordinary one, she spent more than a minute at a mirror, arranging the loosened tresses.

"Really, it is in uncommonly good taste," commenced Frederick Dillingborough, with a sarcastic sneer and a soft voice, when she turned from the glass and regarded him once more; but suddenly his nerve failed him, and, becoming deadly pale, he was unable to continue his criticism.

Rising from his seat, he advanced to her.

"Kate—Kate Nunnneaton—after so many years—"

"You do know me now, then?"

"It is more than twenty years since we saw each other."

"More than five-and-twenty; and yet, long as this time seems, Frederick Dillingborough," she answered, solemnly, "the deeds we did five-and-twenty years ago are to God as fresh as if they were committed but yesterday, and so they will be through all eternity."

"Can you not forgive? can you—"

"Do not think I come to reproach you for the wrong you worked me; for, as far as it affected myself, I forgave it ere I dared to believe my penitence through Christ was accepted by God. I do not presume to judge you for that sin, for your judge is that Eternal Lord of Heaven and earth, before whom I, as well as all other miserable sinners, must appear at the last day. Indeed, I desire no petty vengeance; if I

preserved a spirit of hate for you, it would be amply delighted with the knowledge that, in sleepless midnight hours, and in those saddest moments the vicious are cursed with, the vision of me in my girlhood's fresh loveliness, and of your treachery, has tortured you with torments such as evil spirits in hell (whom may God pardon!) suffer. I doubt not for many a day you have thought me dead, and often a cold, lifeless face—my face—has been pillowed by the side of yours."

"Indeed I thought you dead."

"And how did you picture me dying? mad in a hospital? gasping out my last moments of consumption on a workhouse pallet? picked up stiff and stark in the gloomy street by night, starved to death by hunger and biting frosts, and not allowed the stern tranquillity of a pauper's grave, till I had sunk down, lower and lower, through every grade of debasement, and each moral lineament had lost its form and comeliness, and existence, at the same time that each faint trace of my old beauty died out, and my frame became a frightful and repulsive mass? Perhaps your imagination would not permit you to let me, even in such a death, rest, but pictured me at last of some slight use to the race I had done my utmost to injure, and consigned the hand you pressed at the altar of our mock marriage, and the arms that once, soft and warm, encircled your neck, to the knife of an anatomy student. But I was saved from this: heavenly mercy threw me in the way of a good man, who learned my story, and, not satisfied with commiserating my wickedness, blessed me with his friendship and support, and enabled me to live usefully to my fellow-beings, and acceptably, I trust, to God. That is my history—are you satisfied with it?"

He tried to speak, but for some seconds he was powerless to do so; for so deeply was his cold and unrelenting nature affected by the apparition of Miss Nugent, and her words of terrible truth, that his self-possession deserted him. It was

a triumph, though she thought not of it, to her; for she was the first person who had ever vanquished the stony indifference and haughty egotism of that proud man.

"You have some purpose in coming here, Kate," he at length said, with difficulty. "Let me know it. Can I assist you in any way?"

"You are right in thinking I should not come here out of idle curiosity. I have a communication to make to you; listen. Your treachery is discovered, and your father knows your baseness."

"What treachery?"

"Ah! are you then engaged in so many separate villainies that you can not see to which I allude? To solve your doubts, I'll describe the one I point at. You found a young girl, beautiful as a June dawn, pure as an angel of heaven, looking upward, and sending sweet incense upward from her lowly place like those choicest flowers God has set in the surface of the earth. Her lot was not without its trials—indeed, it could not be called a fair one, for it was thick planted with difficulties and troubles—many and great enough to appal a stronger and wiser woman. But her heart was full of courage as it was of gentleness, for she loved God, and understood the loveliest of His works. Upon this dear thing you came—you saw her honestly, quietly, bravely striving to do her duty—now and then downcast, at times depressed and tearful, but, upon the whole, successful in her endeavors; and you, with fiendish malice and cunning, set yourself to work to degrade and ruin her—to raise within her hopes impossible to be realized—to sow discontent in her trustful mind—to taint the purity of her nature, and to sap and undermine all her moral strength."

She stopped; and a flush of relief and satisfaction crossed his face as she did so, and he said, in a tone of expostulation that was partly feigned, "But why dwell on the past? Is it only to reproach me you have come?"

"Ah! you misunderstand me," was the answer; "and your doing so shows how like two very different acts of villainy may be in some particulars. I am not speaking of myself, but of your wretched plot against your father's wife."

Frederick Dillingborough started.

"Ay, you see now that you are stripped of your concealment; and I can with honesty assure you that no room for denial or subterfuge is left you. For many months watchful eyes have been upon you; you have never stirred from your home but spies have been close to you; when you have been skulking in the dark, observing the conduct of your intended victims, your actions have been well marked; and the very agents of your dishonor—hired to aid you in your crime—have betrayed you. Do your worst now; you will never work separation between the grand old man and his darling; not an hour ago I left them, she confessing all to him, and he not only forgiving, but asking forgiveness of her."

"And this is your vengeance?" said Frederick Dillingborough, bitterly, sinking upon his sofa, and eyeing her with a glance of the intensest hate.

"May the Almighty judge me if revenge has urged me on to act as I have done, or if I have come here this night with a desire to triumph over you!"

These words were uttered slowly, and very solemnly; and having said them, she uttered no more, but turned away and quitted the room.

Once more in the bright and bustling streets, she pulled her veil close over her face, and walked rapidly to the nearest cab-stand, and having entered it, requested to be driven to Quolibet Street.

It was past eleven, and all the quarter through which she passed was thronged with carriages, some carrying rich freights of beauty to brilliant balls, some waiting to take up parties at the operas and theatres. Oh! how many in that

great and wealthy city were on their way to pleasure, with exultant hearts! and she, how lone and sad!

Quolibet Street was quiet, with scarcely a vehicle of any kind in it, and only very few foot-passengers. Slowly jolting over the pavement, the cab containing Kate Nugent was dragged up to George Hassell's professional residence, and the instant it stopped before it the door of the house opened, and its master hastened down the steps as if to receive an expected visitor. But at that same moment a man came up and hastily addressed him.

"Mr. Hassell I believe you are, sir?" observed the man, respectfully, eyeing the surgeon under the gas-lamp.

"Yes: what do you want? I am in haste."

"Do come, sir, directly to my house—the York Hotel, in Bridge Street. A gentleman was brought in there, half an hour since, insensible with loss of blood from bursting a vessel; he is now just conscious, and wants to see you."

The place was so quiet that Kate could hear every word as she sat in the cab.

"Do you know his name?" inquired George.

"Here is his card, sir, but I have not looked at it."

Taking the card under the lamp, George Hassell read the letters upon it, and exclaimed, "I'll come directly; dear me, 'tis Hugh Falcon!"

"Mr. Hassell," cried Kate Nugent, putting her head forth out of the cab, "come in here, and let me go with you. This is my doing—the work of my rash temper—oh, let me go with you!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE PENULTIMATE.

Alone in the world, his father dead, and Frances taken from him by means more cruel than death, Everitt Brookbank sat upon the tomb that covered the old captain's narrow bed, staring out upon life's blank, dreary prospect, stupefied with affliction, and careless of consolation. Before him and behind him was death; and he rested on a grave.

That being who had infused the glow and tender beauty of affection into his past existence—the simple companion, the wise friend, the gentle, calm, unselfish, considerate sharer of all his ambitions and triumphs, his passing sorrows and vivid joys, the very giver of the breath of life to him—was no more with him—was never again to be seen, or heard, or touched, except in dreams—and in heaven; and that other one to whom he imagined it given to influence all his future, ever creating and developing within him greater energies and nobler faculties, had changed. Ah! how changed! Nay, she had not altered—no, not a jot; she had ever been what he at length had discovered her, and like to her were all her sisters, and "love," "disinterested affection," "womanly devotion," "moral beauty," were nothing more than children of fancy, born to perplex weak brains. All that seemed excellence was but a cunning lie that cheated its own framer. Poor fellow! Many are the men, good and true as he, so constituted, that when their faith in woman dies, their faith in God perishes also.

There was business to be performed, with all its vulgar details to be attended to. Steps had to be taken for the letting of the old house, the disposal of furniture, the dismissal of servants, and the breaking up of the establishment. The

condolences of friends had to be responded to by letters or personal interviews; and many irksome and distasteful tasks had to be performed. Amiable but rather cold-blooded observers, venerable ladies of the village who had buried three or four husbands, or had never had one to arouse their finer feelings, and such others, standing by, and critically watching the young man under the novel influences of acute sorrow, just as they were in the habit of watching the flowers of their gardens, that were being treated with a new artificial manure, remarked to each other, with a judicious nodding of heads, that it was fortunate Mr. Everitt Brookbank was compelled to exert himself, for "really, in his case, the necessity of doing something was every thing." And so, if Everitt was not gratified with "this necessity of doing something," it is a comfort that these grim spectators were.

At last, with business that had required immediate attention all dispatched, and with business that might be deferred put off till another and more convenient season, Everitt withdrew from his father's hamlet—where he himself had first known childhood—and went to a distant and secluded nook of Devonshire, to make a short visit to some old and very dear friends. But, kind as they were to him, allowing him free liberty of action, and, above all other things, perfect immunity from all spoken expressions of sympathy, he did not remain long with them; for in so deep a gloom was he, he was not able to endure the jar even of social cheerfulness. Promising to visit these dear friends again before many months, he bade them farewell for a time; and anxious to be alone, free from curious eyes, and impertinent followers of his steps, he left England, unattended by friend or servant.

More than one city and more than one country he visited. First he went to Paris, and for many days moved about, silent and sad, through the gay crowds of that delicious capital, and ever in his solitary walks he would pass that spot where he had first beheld her whom he had so deeply

loved. Melancholy and self-absorbed, he held no intercourse with any, save a few little children who were in the habit of playing in the court of his hotel, and were not frightened by his stern face, but even conceived an affection for it. From France he went to Berlin, and after having sojourned there for a few weeks he started for the south.

It was autumn—the fair country lying under the warm, blue firmament, the golden hue deepening in the waving corn-fields, and every glen, and forest-brake, and hill re-echoing the songs of nature's happiness—when Everitt, according to his engagement, and obeying the strong impulses of his heart, returned to Devonshire. He was very pale and weak, and altered—scarce stout enough for the ghost of his former self, and striking those who beheld him with a sensation of affright, such traces of unspeakable suffering were there in his wan countenance. He had been ill, he said—very ill, and had struggled through a severe attack of fever at Florence, tended only by strangers. This was all the explanation he gave to the many acquaintances he met; but to one much-loved friend, a venerable and gentle lady, who had been the school-friend of his mother, and the affectionate companion of his father, he spoke more fully, saying how his illness came upon him after he had passed in public two persons he had once known well, a lovely bride the one, and her newly-married husband the other. How he greeted them calmly, and with words of cordial welcome, and then went home, and fell upon his bed, and for many long days was mad; and how, when consciousness returned, every one who approached him—the good physician, and the pious sister who nursed him, and the earnest, unofficious priest who daily came to pray by his side—believed for weeks that he must die, and how he felt so too, and besought God that he might not be disappointed of the grave.

But it had seemed right to Heaven that he should recover; and he was at length almost well again, and his spirits were

better, and he would do his best to rouse himself, and live worthily—as a good man ought to live. So did he speak, with a plaintive voice, and tears that called forth his hearer's, laying his head upon the breast of that good woman—that second mother of his.

And now, thank God! in his native air his strength soon returned, his nerves regained their accustomed power, and the fresh color came back to his cheeks; and gradually reappeared all those more delicate constituents of his good looks, which especially depend upon health. Soon he began to make excursions into the country; and, before harvest had reached its middle, he caused no alarm to the household of which he was a member if he went out in the morning and did not return till nightfall, or even the next day.

Far up over Dartmoor he would roam—by the streams he had fished in early boyhood—away from village, or farmhouse, or cottage, or homestead of any kind, penetrating into the awful solitude, till he started at the sound of his own feet, and the light whispering of his own breathings, and verily overcome by the spirit of the unspeakable loneliness, fell upon his knees, and cried aloud, and was answered from the still, calm heavens that he was not unaccompanied. Or, taking an opposite direction, he would ramble through rich corn-lands, over parks stocked with noble trees that sent forth huge flakes of dark, luxuriant leafage, through shaded lanes walled in with high banks and roofed with giant arms of timber and murmuring foliage, and up bold hills from whose summits he looked down on many rivers running their shining ways to the sea, on half a hundred village spires, peaceful towns, a city overtopped by its dark Cathedral towers, great mansions almost buried in forests, undulating plains rich with cattle and grain, clothed with bands of blithesome workers and cots of happy peasants, and hills rising above hills, and so melting away, aloft and in the distance, that no eye could discern where earth ended and heaven began, the misty blue of

the remote summits so mingling with the hazy blue of the far-off sky that a gazer might think heaven and earth were one.

Reposing on a hill-side, beneath the canopy of an oak, with such a prospect before him, Everitt would spend whole days in dreamily thinking, dreamily receiving wise solace from nature, and dreamily making wise resolves for the future. Sometimes he would fall into an easy slumber, never lasting for many minutes, and always beginning and ending with some pleasant vision. More than once he was aroused from unconsciousness by the sound of a diffused rattling in the distance near the horizon, which rattling would by degrees grow more and more distinct, as it came nearer and nearer; then it would become a violent and thunderous rumble within the bowels of the opposite hill; and in another instant, with a clatter and a bang, and a shrill scream of triumph, the train would dart out from the black woodland, and tearing, and grinding, and flapping (hundreds of different valleys receiving and re-echoing the noise), would sweep athwart the plain. And whenever this occurred, Everitt would start to his feet, glad at the sight of new visitors to that lovely land, and almost with a sensation that he ought to hasten to the next station and bid them welcome, as Nature's master of the ceremonies.

One noteworthy day in such a spot as we have here described, Everitt spent many tranquil hours in reading the last volume of his father's manuscript journal. The old captain had accomplished what nearly every one resolves to do, and what scarcely any one performs; he had kept a methodical journal of all his more important transactions and sensations; and this interesting work extended from a short time subsequent to his marriage up to his death. Everitt had never perused it during his father's life, though he had often been present when the old man referred to it for a date; but, now that he had no more the bland, hearty voice to make music in his ears, it is inexpressible the sacred delight he found in reading these notes of the rough, honest hand.

The diary was a strange medley—scraps of history, memoranda of county gossip, meditations on religion, anxieties about his child, lists of the guests at different dinner-parties, disjointed accounts of pocket-money—facts and sentiments were there in the utmost confusion. Not the least affecting of these entries were little mems. touching such little sins and failings as had marked the writer's life, such as the following: "Mem. I spoke very hastily to pore Bardell yesterday, telling him he ought to be more straightforward; and I am sorry I did it, for it was only becaws I was in a passion, and he, pore man, though he has not been honest, is sore pressed now with misfortune." And again: "Dined with Sir Harrie Grove yesterday. Mem. I took too much wine, and I am deeply sorry for it—drunkenes is a sin; an' if I do so, I shall be a bad exsample to my dear boy Everitt, which is too horible, too base to think of."

To Everitt the diary became more and more interesting as it reached its close, for his name was mentioned more frequently, and always with strong expressions of affection; and when he reached the last page, his eyes were blinded with tears, his brain became dizzy, and though the words his mind received were read from the paper, it seemed as if he took them in with his ears from his father's lips. The following was the final entry, made only two days before the captain was attacked with his fatal illness:

"Wednesday evening, ———, A.D.

"This day has been very mild and cheerful, quite summer-like, a soft wind blowing, and just tempering the hete of the sun. This afternoon I walked to my old favorite seat on Mountain Cray, and for full to hours I sat there looking out over the mery sea, and thinking to myself. Somehow old times came up, when I was a boy, first afore I went to sea, and then when I was some yeres older, after Miss ——— had falsely treated me, and then from far away where the waters were sighing in the wite fog, which was like silver in

the sun, I thought I saw my dear wife come, looking an angel as she is, and smilin' on me as she used to—long, long ago, and my heart seemed like to brake for joy, an' my eyes were hot with tears, for I was so glad. But I have no power to put down my feelings.

"I was not eighteen years old when I first fell in love with Miss ———. She was strangely bewtiful—even more so than my dear wife, and she was highly born, and with great riches, and she told me that she loved me, and she vowed to be my wife. But she deceived me with a tongue too subtel for one so fare; and ah me! it almost broke my heart, and for long I was a wicked man, and in my madness called God a liar. However, by God's grate mercy, I o'ercame the storm, and my wild, revengeful feelings and my scorn left me, and God blessed me with power to love annother, and He also cawsed her to love me, and this it was who was afterward my boy's mother. And I saw my former self as I had not befor: I found out how, becaws Miss ——— was bewtiful, I had without consideration or examination attributed to her all that is lovely in trew womanly nature, and also how much of vanity and worldly ambition, though I did not know it at the time, mingled with my passion for her, and that I wished to attach so brite a jewel to me, rather than to fal before her with a desire to serve her as one far supearior to me, which I did to my dear wife. In my darling wife also I found what in my anguish I had sworn was false, that human excelence is possible, and that the ideas all chivalric and honest men have of woman are no vain conceits, which indeed is reasonable, for we have a longing to find such excelence; and every where in God's world we find there is what we long for. There is water for the thirsty—there is meat for the hungry. There are lovely landscapes for those who desire to see what is bewtiful. Even I think I could believe in Heaven, apart from the prommises of our Lord and Saviour, becaws I so want to be in it.

"I am no scolar, having in my youth had only a pore education, and I was always slow at learning, yet I make bold to put downe my thoughts here; for one day perhaps my dear boy Everitt, who has never been any thing but a pride and joy to me, will like to rede them when I am no more.

"And now I will go to bed, and untill I sleep will lie and think of Everitt."

The pages of the diary from which this extract is made were in several places stained with tears from the writer's eyes, and before Everitt rose from the ground and closed the book the leaves were again made wet. How he blessed that father's memory! resting with delight on this passage, and finding something to love in each quaint or cramped sentence, and in each defect of orthography. Who was Miss ———? Everitt had never heard his father mention her name, or the circumstances that connected him and her. How similar, too, was the sire's case to the son's! that affecting narrative came from the peaceful grave with explanation, counsel, and the encouragements of fatherly solicitude. It solved the riddle of the past, it pointed out to him the moral of his bitter experience, and gave him spirit to look cheerily and bravely upon the future.

It was late in the evening when he arrived once more at the retreat that had been opened to him; but that dear friend of whom we have already spoken had not retired to rest, and was able to see him.

"Everitt, you are well again—I see it. Oh! I am very grateful, for I see it," she exclaimed with delight when she saw him, so great a change had a few hours wrought in him.

"You are right," he answered, gravely; "for a week past my bodily strength has been restored to me, and this day the disease has left my soul, and again my heart is fresh and hopeful."

As he spoke he opened the book of his morning's study, reverentially as he would have unclasped a Bible, and, putting it before her, motioned to her to read the passage.

She perused it, and when she had concluded it, she raised her gentle face, and putting Everitt's hand on her gray locks, looked up at him and softly said, I may tell you now, for the time is come. I knew *he* had written this, for he told me he would do so, and he carefully worded it, that under no circumstances might it cause you pain. And he also gave me leave to tell you, if ever I saw right to do so, that Frances Leatheby's mother wronged him as Frances wronged you. He dared not tell you this himself; for before it ever occurred to him that it might be advisable to do so, you loved her."

Nothing more was said that night; and Everitt, retiring to his bed-room, wearied with the exertion and tumultuous joy of the day, was soon wrapped in placid and deep sleep.

The next morning he found by his plate on the breakfast-table a summons from the outer world to action and benevolence in the shape of a hastily-penned letter from Emily Allerton.

It ran thus:

"Dear Mr. Brookbank,—You are not perhaps aware how ill our dear Hugh has been. Several months since he broke a blood-vessel in his lungs, and from that time he has been in a very precarious state, hovering between life and death. You would scarcely know him, so reduced is he; but Mr. Hassell, who has attended and nursed him like a brother, is still hopeful that he will survive this terrible illness. He has spoken during the last three months very frequently of you; and I am sure, if you would do him the great kindness of coming to see him, it would do him much good.

"Yesterday he told me that you and he were estranged, and that the cause of the unpleasantness was his fault, and

he longs to write and tell you so, and to ask your forgiveness, but alas! he is so weak that just now he can not hold a pen.

"Some long time since, when he was stronger, he completed a letter for you; but, on hearing of your dear father's death, he declined sending it you, not wishing to disturb you in your affliction.

"Believe me, dear Mr. Brookbank, very sincerely yours,

"EMILY ALLERTON.

"Gray's Inn."

It is needless to say that Everitt did not waste any time in debating whether he should accept this invitation. Within half an hour he had taken leave of his Devonshire retreat, and ere the day had fairly closed in night he was in London. From the Paddington Station of the Great Western Railway he was driven rapidly through the town to the city, where, in Quolibet Street, he had the good fortune to find George Hassell, who gave him leave to proceed immediately to Hugh's rooms in Gray's Inn, only cautioning him to send in his name to Emily Allerton, who, in her capacity of nurse, had taken up her abode there, and not to burst in abruptly on the patient.

With a hurried step Everitt mounted the dark staircase that led to Hugh's chambers, and his heart beat nervously as he tapped at the outer door, which was instantly opened, and by Emily herself. They did not indulge in any of the customary formalities of greeting, for the one great interest they had in common occupied all their attention.

"He is asleep now," were Emily's first words, uttered in a subdued whisper; "the opiate he took early in the evening is now giving him rest; come in softly."

"How is he?"

"Better—I am sure he is better, but you may not see him till he is awake again."

Leading the way into the front sitting-room, that was separated from Hugh's dormitory by an intervening apart-

ment, Emily put down the candle she had in her hand when she opened the door, and then, when Everitt had taken his seat by her side, and the doors were closed, she recounted to him in a low voice, so that the sleeper might not be disturbed, all the circumstances and events connected with Hugh's illness and parting from Isabel, with which we are familiar, but of which Everitt was in ignorance.

Very pathetically, because very simply, was the story told; and Everitt was not slightly affected, as he remarked how delicately the narrator touched on the more painful details, and with what pleasure she enlarged on every point that told in favor of Hugh, or any one else, and how, when she described the progress of his illness, she seemed altogether forgetful of herself—her long night-watchings, her patient tending of the sick man, her great endurance—and only to remember the good and Christian services of those who had aided her in her task.

Two hours, and perhaps even longer, Everitt and Emily conversed about Hugh, when there was a little tap at the door, which was opened by a woman whom Everitt had seen before, but in a very different guise, and who now came up to Emily.

"This is Matty—Kate Nugent's old friend, of whom I spoke to you just now," said Emily, introducing Madge Gardiner to Everitt; "she has nursed Hugh from the day when he first fell ill."

Madge, still attired like a servant, but far more respectably than when we first made her acquaintance, made a movement of obeisance to Everitt, and then addressing Emily, said, "He is still sleeping on, ma'am, like a babe; so now, dear young lady, do allow yourself to go to bed, for not a wink did you sleep last night, as you know you did not."

"I have slept more than you have, Matty, in the last four-and-twenty hours," returned Emily, laying her white hand kindly on Madge's arm.

"But I can bear it, and you can't—so do go; he'll want nothing but what my one arm can do for him."

Everitt looked at Emily, and observing the worn and distressed expression of her countenance, and her eyes dim from want of rest, seconded Madge's exhortation with the best eloquence he could command. But Emily could not be prevailed upon to comply until Everitt proposed that both she and Madge should retire to rest in the next set of chambers, where they had caused sleeping-rooms to be fitted up, and that they should leave him to take charge of the sick man.

This plan, Everitt argued, had more than one thing in its favor, for it would not only give both the nurses a night's rest, but it would also afford him the best possible means of reappearing before Hugh, who, on seeing him when he should first awake, would not be shocked with surprise, but receive him, first, as a feature of an agreeable dream, and then gradually rise to the consciousness of his being really in the presence of his friend. And so ingeniously did Everitt urge his proposal, that eventually it was received; and after being instructed in the arrangements of the sick-room as to the proper use of cough tinctures, and fever mixture, and the proper times for the administration of iced fruit, if the patient should wake up, he succeeded in banishing to their rest Emily and the faithful Matty.

Either the opiate Hugh had taken was a powerful one, or some change was taking place in his system that especially disposed him to sleep, for he continued to slumber tranquilly throughout the night, even till another dawn was breaking, and Everitt was considering whether he might not divert himself with putting out the night-light.

At last the sleeper turned round, and slowly opening his eyes, gazed at the occupant of the chair by his side with doubt and surprise.

"Do not be frightened, old fellow: it is I, Hugh," Everitt whispered, taking Hugh's emaciated hand.

"Did *she* send for you?" inquired Hugh, faintly.

Everitt nodded.

"Emily?"

Everitt nodded again; and in response Hugh smiled his old smile of welcome and pleasure, and then the faint voice added, "God bless her! she is so very good."

"Everitt," continued the faint voice, "I have been wanting to see you for a long time, and to tell you that you were right and I was wrong, and that I have been severely punished, as I deserved."

"Hush, hush, dear Hugh! I have been more wrong than you, and have been very ill; but God has restored me, and so He will bring you again to health."

But Hugh, raising his wasted face from the pillow, and feebly shaking his head, answered, "No, no—never again—never again. I shall die."

The cough now seized him again, and Everitt, having administered a spoonful of the linctus as he had been directed, urged him not to talk, but to close his eyes and try to sleep again.

"I will do so; but, Everitt, do not entertain false hopes; I shall not be long with you."

"But you shall live," said Everitt, warmly; and then, rising up and bending down, he added, "for, Hugh, though you leave the world, you will not die to us."

At those words Hugh smiled, as if they pleased him; and then closing his eyes—his hand still remaining in Everitt's, and that placid smile still resting on his face—he once more fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE LAST.

For many weeks, indeed for many months, Hugh continued to vacillate between life and death; but for several days after Everitt's advent he appeared to improve very much, getting so much the better of his malady, and regaining so much strength that he was able to sit up by the open window of his sitting-room, which looked upon the green gardens and fine trees of Gray's Inn, and was even taken out more than once in a chair into the quiet avenue of those pleasant grounds.

Regularly twice a day George Hassell paid the invalid a visit, and as often encouraged him to entertain the project of moving to Hastings; but Hugh was very averse to the thought of leaving London.

"Everitt and Emily shall go with you," urged George, "and I'll be unceasingly coming to see you, my dear boy."

"But not twice a day," Hugh returned, with a grateful smile; "no, no, don't banish me till the winter is close upon us."

And so firm was he in his wish to remain as long as possible in town, that George Hassell, and the physicians who attended him, agreed that it would be best to let him have his own way.

Everitt re-established himself in his chambers in the Temple—that is to say, he used them when he retired from Hugh's rooms to rest; but by far the greater part of his time was consumed in friendly services in Gray's Inn. Every day, also, some member of the Slaughton party, besides George Hassell, would be sure to call; either Mr. Harvey, on his way to the city, would bring upon the scene his hearty face and a bas-

ket of choice fruit, or some other such acceptable present, or Kate Nugent would spare an hour from her customary charitable labors, and not uncharitably devote it to making Hugh's room more cheerful by her presence, or Mary Hassell would come in and wait till her brother called and took her back to Slaughton. Nor was sympathy for Hugh confined to this small circle; for even many of the fashionable people in the West End of the town were so affected by their "amusing friend's" indisposition, that they sent down servants to Holborn to make inquiries after him, or left their cards for him at his favorite club; and Everitt learned from Emily Allerton that Miss Nugent sent frequent letters concerning the variations of the invalid's state to the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough, who was residing at Brandon with Isabel, for whom, it was clear, his affection had not diminished a whit —a fact that was fruitful rather of surprise than satisfaction to that picturesque city.

The rector, Everitt was also informed, had undergone severe illness during the months of June and July last, insomuch that his medical attendants were surprised at his recovery, which he himself attributed, through God's mercy, to the unceasing care Isabel took of him.

The members of that little party who surrounded Hugh became very intimate with each other, and daily some little circumstance, too trifling for especial mention, occurred to make them more united, and to increase their mutual love and admiration. Mr. Harvey, who had ever conceived a decided liking for Everitt, became more impressed with his noble qualities; and often the two would recreate themselves with brisk walking exercise, during which the merchant would lead Everitt on to give forth his sentiments freely and boldly. Hugh especially won upon the regard of each of his companions, displaying such gentleness and cheerful resignation of temper, bearing his sufferings with such easy and seemingly unconscious fortitude, and constantly diverting attention from

his distress by such playful exercises of that subtle humor which was his most fascinating mental power, that even Everitt and Emily for brief periods forgot their solicitude for him in their enjoyment of his society. Of course he was permitted to talk but very little, and was compelled to pass hours together without speaking, in which times of silence he meditated on this life and the one hereafter, and all those sacred topics religion reveals to man; and, reviewing that brief portion of his fretful existence that lay open to memory, he sought forgiveness for his many errings.

One evening, when they happened to be alone together, Everitt asked him if he looked cheerfully on death, and was honestly preparing himself for it; and Hugh responded, with quiet fervor, that he was incapable of neglecting so solemn a subject, and that every night and morning his dear sister Emily prayed with and read to him; and, added he, with holy tears in his eyes, "I could reason always, but she has taught me to believe." After this they were silent for many minutes, when Hugh, raising himself in his bed, gave utterance to the following speech, as if he were only resuming the subject of Emily's perfection: "Everitt, I know no woman so good as she is, and I can not imagine one better. It is not my creed that good women are few; indeed, no man who is acquainted with the world as it is at present constituted can question how superior women are to us men. I am not thinking now of the untaught and very poor classes—the degraded, in fact, who have never had a grade to lose—nor am I considering the few persons who constitute the frivolous, fashionable world; but I am regarding those of our own rank —the great middle classes; and I say that among them I know scarce a man fit to die, and hardly one woman who is not ripe for heaven. And yet Emily is distinct from all others, and far, far above them. All her life has been one of self-denial and rendering good service to others, and still she declares it to have been a happy one. When she was a lit-

tle, light-haired child, it was she who kept her unhappy father's home cheerful, and made it, in some degree, have the air of an Englishman's house; when my brother fell in love with her sister, it was she who fought all the difficulties that stood in the way of their marriage, though she knew that by it she should lose her best, almost her only companion; you know the years she devoted to her father's declining powers, and how, while nursing him, she found means to bring up little Arthur, and do a world of benevolence among poor people. Now she is with me; and you'll find, when I am dead and gone, she'll cheerfully resume her duties as her nephew's guardian, and, by Miss Nugent's side, be zealously laboring at that work which we men are always talking about, and writing poetry about, but scarce ever lend a hand to accomplish."

"Perhaps she will marry," suggested Everitt.

But Hugh did not reply; and soon afterward he closed his eyes, and peacefully descended into sleep.

The day subsequent to this conversation Hugh's seeming progress met with a sudden check, and he was thrown back into a state of imminent danger. A change in the weather, such as not unfrequently occurs in autumn, from heat to cold, gave him a chill as he was taking his daily airing in the avenue, and this chill was followed by fever, coughing, and a fresh attack of bleeding. At last all hope for him seemed gone; and even George Hassell, who had refused to despair in the face of the gloomy prognostications of several eminent physicians, now changed his tone, and acknowledged that the worst was to be feared, and that the "worst" might come at any moment. But, to the surprise of every one, Hugh rallied again, so as to be able to sit up and converse with comfort; but the improvement had no signs of permanency, and it was firmly impressed upon the sick man's mind that his end was near.

One evening at this period, while Everitt, and Emily, and

George Hassell were sitting with him, he spoke to them at much length, calmly, and in such a manner that they were deeply affected. Taking his eyes from the trees in the garden, which, tinted with the red sunset, he had been contemplating in silence, he remarked that it was the last evening he should ever behold, and that exactly like to this evening, suffused with the same ruddy light, having the same music in the heavens, and causing the very same emotions in his mind, was the first evening that he felt the beauty of in earliest childhood; he knew this was so, for a strange power had fallen on his mind, enabling him to look back clearly into days long, long ago. Then he reviewed his entire life from its first young spring, recounting what a fresh, light-hearted schoolboy he was, a remarkably swift runner for his years, and the darling of all his mates, and especially those who shared the same dormitory with him, for he would tell them strange fairy stories after they were in bed; recounting how he went to sea, cherishing one ambition, that night by night he dreamed of, that he might live to be a Nelson, and save Old England from her enemies; and recounting how, disappointed in this profession, he went to Oxford with glowing hopes and a sanguine disposition, and resolved to work hard and earn honorable distinction.

Then he alluded to another change in his life's plan, and to Isabel; his application to literature, his devotion to that art, and first success in it; then again he spoke of Isabel, and of what he called his downfall, describing how he neglected that high vocation whereunto he was called, and, seduced by flattery and paltry vanity, deserted poetry, and dwindled down into the flippant worldling and merry jester. And here his eyes filled with tears, and, in conclusion, he faltered out, "I wish that I had died before, for such as I do great harm in the world; we do not frighten men with hideous sins, but charm them with fair-seeming ones."

That night he took leave of those who approached him

with especial solemnity, as for the last time. Madge came into the room as he was saying "farewell" to his friends, and, drawing near to him, with her eyes besought his notice; upon which he kissed her, and said, "Dear Matty, good-by; you have kept your promise, and preserved me from a great harm, for you saved Isabel."

After this, at Hugh's request, every one retired except Everitt, who was to watch by the bedside.

"Everitt," said Hugh, when he and his old friend were alone together, "some nights since we spoke of Emily, and I said there was no woman equal to her."

"Yes, yes."

"Of course one other was excepted," the poor fellow stammered; "you know whom I mean."

"Yes, yes; shall I bear her a message from you?"

A flush shot into his wan face as he drew his hand from under the coverlet and displayed Isabel's miniature. "She does not know I have this," he said; "but I always wear it hung round my neck, and have done so for years. Be careful it is not taken from me when I am dead; and, Everitt, by-and-by, when no wrong can be done by your obeying me, when her husband has left her free to think of me, tell her I wear it in the grave."

Everitt pressed his hand, and with difficulty found power to utter, "I will remember."

"And, Everitt," continued Hugh, "I have one thing more to tell you; it is a secret I have long guarded, and I would not impart it to you now if I thought I should live, for it concerns not only you and me, but Emily. Come nearer to me, and I'll whisper it to you."

Stooping down and placing his ear close to Hugh's lips, Everitt listened, and caught up with terrible delight those faint murmurs which revealed to him that jealously-kept secret.

It was, however, written in the book of destiny that Hugh

should not die—at least, not on that night; for the next morning he opened his eyes after a long, tranquil, and refreshing sleep, astonished to find himself still in this world, and still under the affectionate gaze of Everitt, who had never for an instant left him during his protracted period of repose. And now Hugh once more made rapid strides of amendment, regaining health and strength, and even color, with surprising celerity. Now, too, he changed his views with regard to his chance of prolonged life, both entertaining the possibility of weathering the storm, and hopefully wishing to do so; in which more healthy frame of mind he was, without much difficulty, induced to say that he would allow himself to be taken down to Hastings for the winter.

Immediately this concession was made, Everitt went down to that agreeable place, and selected rooms for the invalid and Emily, and the other faithful nurse, and also in a hotel he engaged apartments for himself, as it was his intention to be near at hand, and yet did not wish to embarrass Emily with his continual presence.

These arrangements being made, the party were, before many days, fixed in their marine retreat; and forthwith so decided were the steps Hugh made in the direction of health, that they all began in good earnest to enjoy themselves. Continually George Hassell and Mr. Harvey came down from town on flying visits, and the latter benevolent man, on the occasion of one of these trips, traveled down with his carriage and horses on the train, and having established them in a livery-stable at Hastings, put them at the disposal of his young friends.

Before the spring had fairly opened, Everitt and Emily had the delight of beholding Hugh strong enough to ride on horseback, to take long walks, to talk with spirit, to resume his literary labors—in short, of seeing him almost his former self. Certainly his spirits were not so habitually mirthful as formerly, but what he had lost in gayety was replaced by

an increase of that thoughtful, winning tenderness of language and manner that had always drawn all people to him. George Hassell was triumphant at the good turn of affairs, and not the less so because, even when they were almost at their worst, he had refused to be despondent. "Let us get over this summer without a mishap, and send him to spend next winter in the Madeiras; and if he return to England as hale and hearty as I hope to see him, there will be no assignable reason why he should not live till he is eighty," said George, in the common council.

"When the spring winds have fairly taken their departure, they shall leave this place, and summer it with me at Slaughton," put in Mr. Harvey, with decision. "Emily, my dear, you'll come with him? and Everitt, so will you?"

"No one consults me," remarked Hugh.

"Of course not, you spoiled child," responded Emily, with severity; "it is your place to *obey*."

So then it was determined, and nothing untoward occurred to put out their admirable plans. But, ere it was deemed prudent for Hugh to quit his warm retreat, an event took place which must be here recorded, as it gave as much surprise to Everitt as we doubt not it will afford satisfaction to the readers of his history.

"Dear Mr. Harvey!" exclaimed Emily, one morning, jumping from her seat as the merchant unexpectedly entered her drawing-room, "what a surprise! Where do you come from?"

"London—by the express; and I must go back by the next train."

"And is it only for the pleasure of seeing us that you have come down for one short hour?"

"Honestly, my dear inquisitor, no; I am here to rob you of Everitt."

"Oh, to take away Mr. Brookbank!" said Emily, turning slightly pale, and trembling—foolish thing.

"Only for a few days, Emily," returned the merchant, with more than ordinary kindness, "only for a few days. Go, my dear girl, and find him, and send him to me, for I think I am the bearer of good news to him."

The significant kindness of his voice made Emily's fair face flush, and she turned hastily to do his bidding; but, before disappearing, she came back from the door, and approaching her old friend, and raising her hands to his shoulders, with tears in her eyes, kissed his rough, manly cheek as if she had been his child.

Ere the lapse of five minutes, Everitt was in the presence of Mr. Harvey, who, going straight to the matter in hand, said, "You know that, by Colonel Willis's death, another member is wanted for Wollerton?"

"Yes."

"The electors requested me to represent them, and their invitation was as kind and complimentary as possible, but I respectfully declined the honor."

"Indeed! but I am not surprised at your doing so, for you are warmly attached to your present constituency."

"Exactly so. But Wollerton, not satisfied with the compliment it had already paid me, gave me another, and a yet more flattering testimonial of respect for me. Another deputation waited on me, requesting me, as I could not myself represent them, to name a man to whom they could intrust their interests in Parliament."

"And how did you reply?"

"By mentioning your name to them with as much praise as I could honestly bestow on it—which, of course, was not much," returned Mr. Harvey, with a smile.

"My name!"

"Yes, your name, my dear boy; and they immediately prepared this formal request to you to become their representative, and asked me to be the bearer of it to you. You need not fear any opposition, for there are not fifty voters in

the entire place who would oppose your election; and the expenses, which will only be a trifle, are to be defrayed by your committee."

"It is a great responsibility."

"You are about the only young man in England who would trouble himself about that; and that," added the merchant, warmly, "is why I have faith in you, and why I wish to get you into the House. There's quite enough talent there, but, I am sorry to say, not so much truthfulness and unassuming honor as there ought to be. We continually hear it asked how the standard of political morality is to be raised, as if it were a problem difficult of solution; and my reply is always, 'Let the people find out representatives who are alike incapable of trickery themselves, and of dealing with those who have recourse to it, and let all the constituencies in the kingdom refuse to uphold men who have broken promises, or have been convicted of any kind of falsehood.'"

"But, after all," suggested Everitt, "you have not mentioned what principles are required in the member for Wollerton."

"Of course," was the answer, made gravely, "they are your own, or I should not be here. But we may not spend our time in talking, for we must be on our way to town, since I engaged to present you to the members of the deputation to-day, when they dine with me at Slaughton."

At this moment Hugh entered the room, and was speedily informed of the matter under consideration.

"Capital! My dear Everitt, how I will write you up in the papers!" exclaimed Hugh, with a cry of exultation, as he seized Everitt's hand.

But Everitt's face fell, and he answered, "But I forget one thing; how came I to be so selfish? If I go into Parliament, I can not accompany you to the Madeiras: no, I must decline the offer."

"My dear boy," replied Hugh, quietly, and with an air of firmness that was all the more impressive because it was unusual with him, "you'll do no such thing. You shall forthwith become member for Wollerton, and shall regularly attend to your duties also. And as to my voyage, since you all wish me to make it, I will do so, but on one condition—that I go alone. For weeks past I have made up my mind on this point, and with regard to it I am determined to have my own way. I will not leave England unless you and Emily promise to remain at home. I will have neither Emily nor you with me; no, no, you will find something better to do than waiting on an invalid who has already been sufficiently bored by you. No, no, you and Emily will be better employed."

"Hush! hush!" said Everitt, coloring, "no play on that subject! Besides, I have not yet a right even to hope."

"Well, well," laughed Mr. Harvey, "you recollect the proverb about the 'faint heart?'"

But there was no time for idle words. The "farewells" were exchanged, and soon Everitt and his good friend were on their way to London in the express train; and late that evening, after Everitt had expressed to the deputation his gratitude for the honor they had conferred upon him, and his acceptance of their invitation, he sat down at Slaughton Park to the first political dinner he was a prominent feature at.

In due time the forms of the election were transacted (usually no very agreeable forms, though novels are prone to represent them so), and Everitt had the pleasure of seeing himself announced in the Morning Papers as "M.P." for Wollerton, and of finding that all the leading journals spoke of his election with satisfaction, and in some cases with eulogistic remarks on his character and attainments.

"I am afraid Hugh must have had a hand in the con-

struction of these complimentary effusions," observed Everitt, with a laugh, pointing to the newspapers.

"No, no—friends never praise you *anonymously*," returned Mr. Harvey, with a smile.

Quickly, and with genial days of warm, balmy breezes frolicking under the blessed sun, with a wealth of flowers, some gorgeous as vulgar prosperity, some fair as purity, with forests alive with the growth of rich vegetation, the hum and murmuring of innumerable winged insects, and the chattering and shrill piping of birds, came the summer; and throughout all glorious England, so full of loveliness, and power, and grace, and goodness, it came to no fairer spot than the domain upon the banks of the Thames, and within sight of the blue Cathedral dome, that we are all by this time familiar with—Slaughton Park. And there, in that happy home, our friends lived, and felt how love and life are one.

As the months sped on, and autumn was commencing to tint the trees, it became clear to all that Everitt Brookbank, Esq., M.P., and Miss Emily Allerton had, in fulfillment of Hugh's prophecy, found something better to do than "waiting on an invalid;" indeed, it was understood that Emily had pronounced that "yes" which it causes womanly natures so much pain and such strange pleasure to utter. And Hugh, before whom the not agreeable prospect of a voyage to the Madeiras began to rise, besought that, since he must go, and was determined to leave those so dear to him behind him, he might at least be able to gladden himself in his absence by looking back on the marriage ceremony, and recalling how lovely the bride was, and how triumphant the bridegroom. And his entreaty was not made in vain; for Emily, shedding many tears, granted him his request.

A few days before the wedding took place, Everitt and Emily were sitting together in a secluded spot in the Park, leafy trees and blue sky *above* them, and the beautiful landscape and blue sky *before* them, when Everitt took her

hands, and, alluding to his mad love for Frances, assured her, with many hot words and with deep emotion, that would neither run, nor struggle, nor be forced into language, that he brought her a heart fresh, and young, and unscarred by disappointment, for that he had never loved any but her.

"I know it—I know it," returned Emily, "you never loved *her*, but what you thought her. *Oh! may I be that which you love!*"

"And are you sure of me—that I am what you love?" asked Everitt, with a smile.

"Woman's love is more discerning than man's," returned Emily, gravely.

"Oh, blind eyes—blind eyes!" cried Everitt.

And he said not badly, for he blinded them with kisses.

NOT A CHAPTER,

ONLY A CONCLUSION.

It now remains to say a few words concerning the various personages these pages have made us acquainted with; to indicate by a few brief sentences how they fared and are faring in respect of those points that have made them interesting to us; and then, with as much sincerity as we can command for the occasion, to bid them farewell.

The wedding solemnities were duly performed at Slaughton before the leaves fell from the trees, Mr. Harvey giving away the bride, and bestowing upon her a fortune equal to that which Everitt came into possession of at the death of his father, by which act of benevolence the good man persisted in saying that he only put in her hands the residue of Mr. Allerton's property.

"It has increased with surprising speed in your hands," observed Emily, when her guardian first sported this ingenious fiction.

"Naturally, my dear," replied the man of business. "Of course, I knew how to manage that it should."

And it may here be stated that Mr. Harvey's generous intentions to Emily and her husband were by no means exhausted by this act, and that they still remain strong as ever; for lately, when speaking to an intimate companion of his testamentary disposal of his property, he said that he was in no want of fit legatees, for his dear girl and Everitt had presented him with three.

Soon after the accomplishment of the marriage ceremony, and before the bride and bridegroom had returned from their wedding-trip to take possession of their modest house, commanding a view of St. James's Park, Hugh left England for the Madeiras. By the commencement of the following summer he came back to his native land, hale and vigorous alike in mind and body, prepared for new intellectual exertion, and determined to lead a wiser and more dignified life than he had ever done before.

One of the first to greet him on his landing was his dear sister Emily, who, during his absence, had become Lady Brookbank, Everitt's old uncle having died and left him the title, with the small estate that was attached to it.

The Reverend Harrie Dillingborough sought and naturally obtained permission to discontinue his annual visits to his London living, and resided with Isabel at Copley or Brandon till his death, which occurred two years after Hugh's return from the Madeiras, and just one year after Isabel had been induced to send little Harrie to "a real boy's school" (as the young gentleman proudly called it) for a preparatory education for Eton.

Never again, from the day when we last saw him in London, did Frederick Dillingborough behold his father; the old man sternly forbade him his presence, and ever after refrained from mentioning his name, even to Isabel. But upon his death the rector's will was found unaltered, save that

Isabel was made sole executrix, and that in a codicil the testator bequeathed his library, and a remarkable ring he had himself worn for many years, "to his dear and much-loved friend, Hugh Falcon, Esq., of Gray's Inn, Holborn, in the county of Middlesex." A letter also, written and directed to Captain Dillingborough, R.N., in the rector's handwriting, and found among his other important papers, informed that distinguished officer that his good fortune in having over thirty thousand pounds left him by his father was due to Isabel's earnest entreaty that *the* will might not be materially altered.

Lord and Lady Brigden are, as is well known, among the most prominent members of the *beau monde* of English society. His lordship's position with the principal political chieftains of the day, and his approaching exaltation from the Irish to the English peerage, are matters of notoriety as much as are the brilliant reunions and dazzling beauty of Lady Brigden. Let us not envy them their worldly success, for it is all they have striven for, and all that they are likely to get.

Lady Crayford still resides at Wolton Hall, battling away bravely with her lord's creditors. The boys of the house, with the exception of Master Arthur, have left school for the army and navy, in which professions they are obtaining such rapid preferment that it is clear they have a powerful friend in the background taking care of their interests.

Captain Potter is tenacious of life and of his active habits; and, though palsy cruelly afflicts him, still contrives to keep a firm seat on his tall bay horse, and to ride about from county-house to county-house, fetching and carrying news as of old. Still he entertains a hope that Death may strike so judiciously as to enable him to die "the grandfather of a British baron."

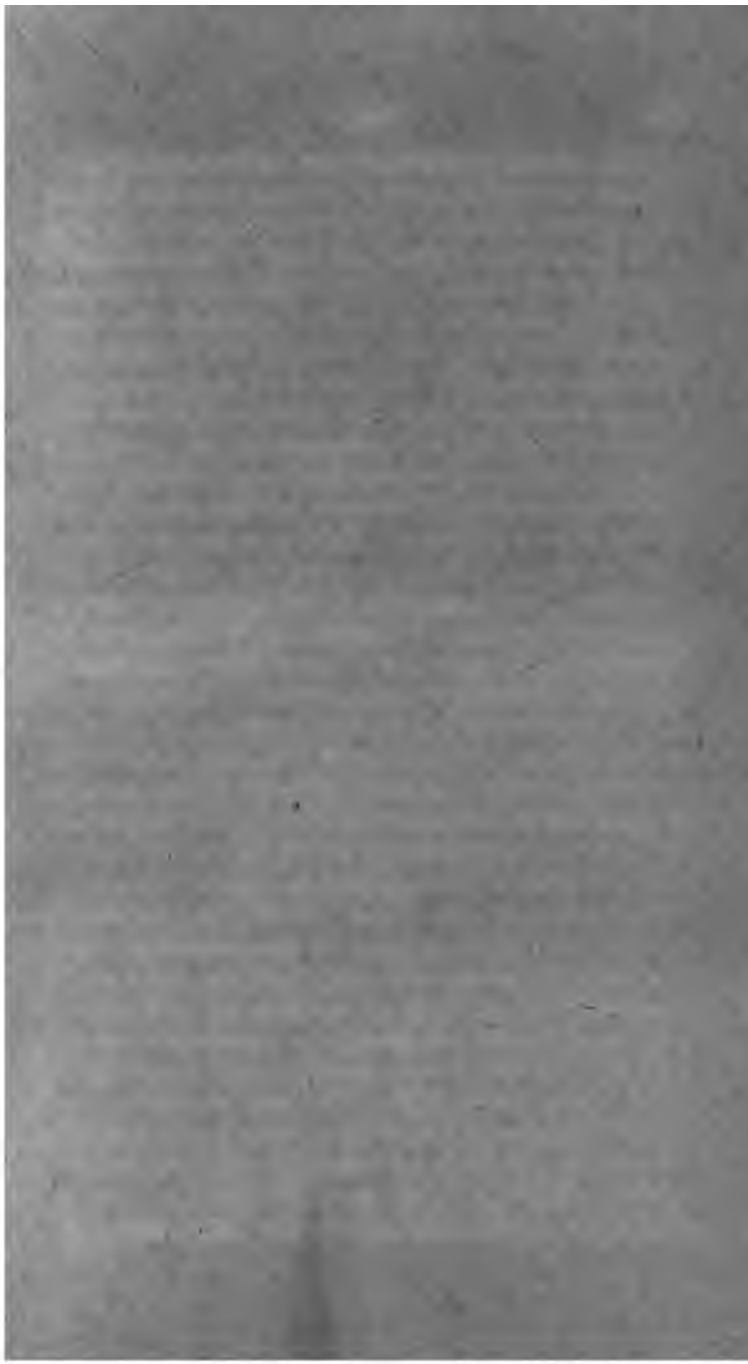
For a year subsequent to the Reverend Harrie Dillingborough's death, Isabel led a retired life at Brandon, visiting

no one. At the conclusion of this period, however, Kate Nugent paid her a long visit, and with difficulty obtained permission to inform Hugh that he might make one visit more to the old Cathedral town.

A few months after this, Everitt and his charming wife were sitting over their breakfast, with the bright sun coming in from the Park to make their morning room cheerful, when Emily, with blooming happiness in her fair cheeks, and living joy in her blue eyes, remarked, in allusion to a subject which they had been discussing, "Then, after all, Hugh and Isabel will be happy."

"Happy, you lovely goose!" returned Sir Everitt Brookbank, with an absurd affectation of amusement, "why, they are going to be married to-morrow."

THE END.



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